

DANTE STUDIES

with the Annual Report
of the Dante Society



CXXVIII

2010

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Acknowledgment

The emblem in the cover design is taken from a medal created by the late sculptor Joseph A. Coletti of Boston, Massachusetts, for the Dante Society in commemoration of the septicentenary of Dante's birth.

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Giuseppe Mazzotta and Arielle Saiber

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LONGFELLOW AND DANTE

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Acknowledgments

A special volume such as this on Dante and Longfellow, which collects articles on different aspects of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's encounter with Dante, is the product of a deeply collaborative effort. It is my pleasure to acknowledge those colleagues whose judgment, knowledge, and critical sophistication have been essential to its production.

Let me say that my first, highly personal, acknowledgment goes to Longfellow himself. He has been recently and once again hailed by poets of the stature of Dana Gioia and John Barr as both "a major American poet" and "one of the most influential figures in our national cultural history." My acknowledgment, however, goes to Longfellow the man-of-letters (in the full sense of the phrase), and I must explain what I mean. When I first read Matthew Pearl's *The Dante Club*, I was eager to turn the pages and read about the strange asymmetry between, on the one hand, the Brahmins' "cult of Dante" and, on the other, the painful reality of Italian immigrants in Boston of the time. Longfellow, who was a genuine poet of life, understood the ironies in the two juxtaposed experiences, the myth and the history, as it were. For him, studying Dante was not just an exercise in escapism; it shaped his core values as well those of other New England gentlemen-scholars. They all believed that America's success depended on its ability to build a new poetic and political framework of thought, and Dante figured centrally in their imagination. I have been thinking for a long time that I wanted to honor Longfellow and that actually I owed him a debt of gratitude for his understanding of the plight of those residents in Boston's North End.

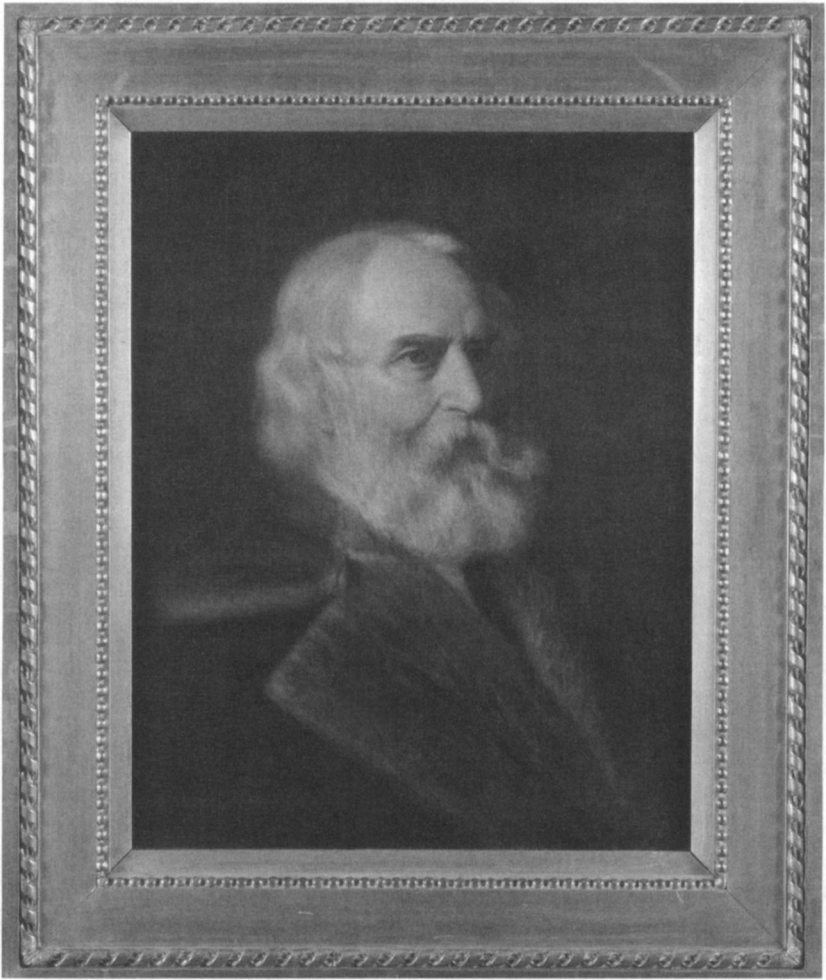
When I first conceived of this volume (when the Dante Society of America renewed its affiliation with the Longfellow House – Washington's

Headquarters National Historic Site), it seemed to me inevitable that I should turn to Arielle Saiber, associate professor of Italian at Bowdoin College, Longfellow's alma mater. I have known Arielle since her graduate school years, and I knew that she would bring to this enterprise her legendary enthusiasm, her sharp critical eye, and her unique ability to work in dialogue with others and across disciplines. The breadth and scope of this volume have benefited greatly from her expertise and commitment.

These acknowledgments would not be complete without recognizing Vincent Pollina's graciously provided assistance. We are indebted to him for research carried out at the Longfellow House in selecting a number of the photographs that accompany this volume and in surveying original documents for several authors.

A final word of thanks goes to Richard Lansing for his wonderful, peerless stewardship of *Dante Studies*.

Giuseppe Mazzotta
Yale University



Ernest Wadsworth Longfellow, portrait of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (oil on canvas, 1876). Longfellow House - Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site. Courtesy National Park Service.

Introduction

The Circumspection of Poets: Longfellow and Dante

GIUSEPPE MAZZOTTA

The aura of a ritual hung over Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's laborious process of translating Dante. Every Wednesday evening from 1865 to 1867 a select circle of friends, like initiates in an esoteric science, would gather in the study of his house at 105 Brattle Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The members of the Dante Club, as it came to be known, in addition to Longfellow, were James Russell Lowell, Charles Eliot Norton, James T. Fields, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Some of them (Lowell and Norton) were to act as institutional leaders in founding and developing the Dante Society of America. Longfellow, who by that time was already a celebrated poet, was busy diligently compiling what was to be hailed as the first complete American translation of the *Divine Comedy* and needed a collaborative, friendly audience to discuss his language, his choices and his taste.

Nowadays Longfellow's house has become a familiar landmark on the map of American history. James M. Shea's opening article of this volume of *Dante Studies* chronicles the phases of the cultural center/memorial presently called the "Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site." In its present form and symbolic function, as Shea documents it, the house has lost nothing of its traditional character and fundamental force. I prize two details of accidentally but really almost metaphysical wit: in 1775 the house/site served as the headquarters for General Washington; since 2004 the Carriage House hosts the annual meeting of the Dante Society of America, while the National Historic Site, standing majestically adjacent to it, holds the volumes of the Society's library. It is impossible not to be struck by this correspondence: Dante has

returned among the shades of the place where his poetry was read, where the first seeds of the DSA were sown, and where the history of the revolutionary American self-consciousness was inaugurated.

"The Power of Place" is how Shea aptly defines the Longfellow House in the belief that one can locate right in that spot the heart of the poet's life and works. It was a workshop where he produced his astonishing body of creative writings and translations; the home where he enjoyed the rituals and comforts of his family life; the study where, as in Dante's Limbo, he conversed with his friends about poetry; and it was the room where, out of the blue, he opened his eyes to the tragic event of his life—the harrowing death of his second wife, Fanny Appleton. The thin line separating the dreadful occurrence from the daily ceremonies of the household shrouds the site in a romantic veil of the mystery of "places."

Late in his life, as Leslie Eckel points out in her essay "Longfellow's Dantean Imagination and the Volume of the World," Longfellow edited the anthology *Poems of Places*, but fairly early on he had tried to grasp in what way places have a power of their own. He wrote poems, such as the "Belfry of Bruges," "Amalfi," and "Il Ponte Vecchio di Firenze," that evoke the specific *genius loci*, the mixture of elemental force, historical memories, and a vitality infused by the imagination of the poet. The grounds of the house on Brattle Street were hallowed by Longfellow himself, who was the bearer of the historical memories of both America and Europe and whose work joined together Dante and Washington.

Space lies at the core of Longfellow's project. In point of fact most of the essays contained here focus on this question or cast it as a premise for their arguments. Christian Dupont's updated version of the essay by J. Chesley Mathews (1971), which first appeared in *Emerson Society Quarterly: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, takes us deeper into the recesses of Longfellow's place as he lists the memorable editions, such as the *Codice Cassinese*, that he kept in his private library. The lively intimacy of the poet's inner circle finds a novelistic extension in the short story by the celebrated raconteur of the *Dante Club*, Matthew Pearl. Other articles reach into the metaphorical interior spaces of Longfellow's imagination. The piece by his direct descendant, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, edited by Christian Dupont, takes us back to the place of his ancestor's birth, the old house in Portland, Maine, where as a boy he discovered the existence of distant worlds, flickers of the Italian landscape, and heard echoes of Dante's poetry in Milton's blank verse.

The contributions by Joan Nordell, Kathleen Verduin, and Kelsey Abbruzzese raise and document a basic question: Dante's place in American literary history. All three essays highlight Longfellow's lifelong passion for Dante, but quite appropriately they make a case for the cosmopolitanism of American letters in the first part of the nineteenth century. Joan Nordell's essay, for instance, traces the complex provenance history of the ten, beautiful copies of Longfellow's translation of the *Commedia* that he privately printed in honor of the sexcentenary anniversary of Dante's birth, one copy of the *Inferno* made explicitly to send to Florence in time for the celebrations. The complete copies, nine of which have been located, comprised the first printed American translation of the *Commedia*, as well signaled the increased international visibility of American letters, and dialogue with scholars across the sea. From this viewpoint, Emerson's fascination with Germany (the transcendental philosophy of Kant and Schelling) was of a piece with Longfellow's love for, among others, Tieck and Goethe and his truly cosmopolitan conception of a *Weltliteratur*. The "American imagination," as Verduin's reflections clarify, was open ended and porous to European thought and literature. While teaching at Bowdoin, as Abbruzzese shows, Longfellow opened himself up to Dante's poetry as if he could find in it a new rootedness, a poetic region beyond his own native language that allowed him to move out of the shell of provincialism and assume his rightful place within the canon of the Western poetic tradition.

It is plain from these articles that Longfellow's horizon could not be and was not literally confined within the comfortable but narrow quarters of New England's sprawling intellectual life. Van Anglen's article recaptures the extraordinarily rich intellectual ferments of New England's intellectual life and produces a clear, sharp image of its complexities. To be sure, Longfellow never completely detached himself from the excitement of the American debates, but he traveled wide and far in a poetic itinerary that unavoidably brought him back to his language: English was his horizon and his home. From that linguistic perspective he could look at foreign-language poetry as one looks at other epochs of history and at parts of distant other worlds. The activity of translating embodies Longfellow's steady desire to encounter and confront different cultures and worlds as a way of reaching a self-interpretation.

The contributions by Aisha Woodward and Igor Candido, by following completely different routes, address what can be called the intellectual geography of Longfellow's translation of Dante. In the process they show

that the two perspectives, the local and the cosmopolitan, far from being opposed, actually implicate one another.

Candido links his reading of Dante to the contemporary European debates (especially Schelling's reflections on myth, science, and theology). Woodward, on the other hand, turns to Longfellow's correspondence with the British Reverend John Dayman over the technical problems of translating Dante's terza rima. One could reasonably add that it is quite conceivable that Longfellow, whose fascination with German culture is well known and who fairly early on in his career had authored *Poetry and the Poets of Europe*, had come across the then widely known lecture by Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translating" (1813). In the light of his theory of hermeneutics as the interpretation of tradition, Schleiermacher strives for an impossible task of overcoming the dualism or distance between separate languages (and between words and their referents), and he discovers that he cannot. Patricia Roylance's paper complements both Candido's and Woodward's arguments. At a historical time when print culture came powerfully into its own in both Europe and America, Dante occasions an encounter between Dante Gabriele Rossetti and Longfellow. For both, as Roylance argues, translating came to mean a blurring of the distance between "foreignness" and "parochialism." Such a harmonizing of two diverse perspectives in fact describes Longfellow's poetics of translation as simultaneously an interpretive and a creative mode of engagement with Dante.

But a question lingers: what exactly brought Longfellow to Dante? Wai Chee Dimock, Leslie Eckel, and Christoph Irmscher, as well as Abbruzzese, tackle this central question and answer it in different ways. Dimock looks at Longfellow's involvement with Dante from an existential and experiential standpoint and highlights his creative autonomy from Dante's views. The influence of Schelling's essay and the "dark" cloud of gloom hovering over American history (the emblem of which are the Salem witch trials and the persecution of the Quakers) account for Longfellow's reversal of Dante's vision: he "speaks" to Longfellow, but what matters, in the deepest sense, is Longfellow's resistance to that voice, his transformation of the "divine comedy" into a "divine tragedy." For Eckel, on the other hand, what drew Longfellow to Dante was his synoptic vision, his power of representing the totality of the world, the physical and spiritual order of the whole creation, "bound up with love together on one volume." Irmscher focuses on Longfellow's fascination with the episode

of Francesca. The erotic tale exemplifies the erotics of Longfellow's reading and translating of Dante, which Irmscher explains by recalling their shared esthetic predilection for the concrete description of the world, their common pleasure of storytelling, the disdain for delirious allegorizations, the personal memory of his wife's death by fire in 1861, and, finally, the self-recognition with Dante's exile or "homelessness."

Because exile was, first of all, a real, historical occurrence for Dante, but it was only a metaphorical perspective for Longfellow, it may not serve as the actual bond holding the two poets together. And yet all the contributions in this volume rightly stress the existence for the two of them of at least two worlds (which variously encompass a national perspective and a transnational sense of literature, nativism and cosmopolitanism, the visible and the invisible, comedy and tragedy, self-same place and otherness, etc.). Though exile may not be the most accurate category, it furnishes the initial basis for explaining why Dante becomes the icon of poetry for his archetypal American translator. For translation is the language of exile, the falling in love with the language of another, an appropriation and a surrendering to what does not belong to oneself. The key to grasping the bond between the poets is the romantic idea of poetry as translation.

Longfellow's essay on Dante's theories about language in the *De vulgari eloquentia* is central to understanding his work as a translator. The revolutionary, radical quality of Dante's linguistic thought and poetic practice—so Longfellow held—lay in his power to leave behind the narrow, familiar domain of the "native" Florentine and to take a leap into an uncharted linguistic sphere. The national idiom he forged is made of scraps drawn from the various dialects that divide the Italian language. No doubt, Longfellow's interpretation of Dante's linguistic tractate echoes Emerson's doctrine of human creativity, his belief that the new, emerging political and social history of America could only be generated by the recognition of the multiple discourses of the tribe.¹ Nothing, I believe, better defines Longfellow's esthetic sensibility than the question of language, which encompasses the "otherness" of every language, the sense of displacement and the awareness that translations can never overcome the differences between texts.

What exile and translations revealed to Dante and what he and Longfellow share is their consciousness that their places in this world are at the frontier. They are poets of the frontier. The term, in its primary geopolitical sense, describes a line of division between two countries, a site of differences and possible confrontation. Nineteenth-century American history reduced the "frontier" to a commonplace. It was, first of all, the

name of a “no-place,” simultaneously a boundary and a threshold, a zone of dangers and exchanges as well as an imaginary line capable of opening up new vistas and favoring new encounters. Longfellow, who was born and grew up in a “frontier town” near the border with Canada, in 1855 wrote *The Song of Hiawatha*. It is an epic poem about the Indian hero who knew the languages of animals and their secrets, and it gives detailed accounts of the lives of Indian tribes in northern Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The popular press called him the “Indian Longfellow,” because of his gift in grasping the Indian worship of nature as well as the inner sense of the “frontier”—the wilderness of log cabins, the pioneers who at the frontier found excitement and freedom, and the seemingly endless confrontations along the Connecticut River valley. As a translator of Dante, Longfellow *confronts* Dante, in the sense that he stands face to face with him at the frontier of their respective visions,

Dante, who traveled, as Longfellow says, “everywhere” across varieties of dialects evokes a different frontier. I have always liked the title and substance of Roger Dragonetti’s study of the *De vulgari eloquentia*, *Aux Frontiers du langage poétique* (Ghent, 1961), recently retrieved, in a Lacanian/Augustinian key, by the French medievalist Alexander Leupin. Dragonetti makes the geography of the Romance languages and the routes of dialects Dante took in his peregrinations the basis of a unified Romance culture. But I apply the metaphor of the “frontier,” or what can be called liminality (a word with a contradictory and ambiguous etymology of *limen* and *limes*, threshold and limit), to the linguistic horizon of the *Divine Comedy*.² Its inherent ambiguity allows the standpoint for simultaneously several perspectives or a *circumspection*, literally a *circum specio*, a round look of vigilance in testing the limits, looking over beyond them, wanting to explore them, and finding out both the power of boundaries and the need for limits, as well as their ultimate inconsistency.

The poem, as is well known, is organized as an itinerary through different worlds, from cities at whose gates the pilgrim is at first forbidden access (*Inf.* 9), to the island where he is stopped as if he were an alien and is accused by Cato of breaking the law (*Purg.* 1), to spaces where he does not know his way about, and to cosmic crossroads that he leaves behind on the way to the beatific vision. The frontier—the line of division between one *soglia* and another (the metaphor shows up in *Par.* 3.82), however, appears always as the place of essential questions about identity and destination. At every turn the pilgrim is asked who he is, where he comes from, and where

he is going. But to stand steadily at the frontier, as he does, is to discover how yielding and receding frontiers are and, in a dialectical movement, how once a frontier is crossed over, new ones appear only to be again transcended. And they all share the same trait: a frontier means that there, nothing is likely to be left unquestioned or is it ever beyond discussion, and that, like age-old frontier disputes, the fabrication of all knowledge is subjected to questioning, searches, and methodical doubt.

Plainly, Dante's theological odyssey wants to experience infinity. He calls it "trasumanar" in a tercet that evokes the primary limit of language. The "going beyond" the human entails a reaching for what is variously called the "uncircumscribed" essence (*valore infinito*) or the abyss of the eternal plan. In short, the pilgrim tests his will to go beyond and look beyond the finite, circumscribed regions of existence. We also know, however, of his fascination with limits. Ethically and politically, the boundaries of laws are steadily upheld by the poet, sheltering walls around Florence are recalled, and we mortals are enjoined to accept limits, the "quia" of knowledge. In fact, Adam's *trapassar* of the mark (*Par.* 26.117) encompasses the awareness of his impulse to transcendence, his need for a different mode of being and, at the same time, his falling away from it. The ambivalence and inseparability between limits and infinite openness, which constitute the distinctive feature of the *Divine Comedy*, are exemplified by a number of concerns, such as the dialectics of time and eternity, the metaphysics of desire, the dynamics of light, and, for our purposes, the structure of poetic language. Indeed, *trasumanar* cannot be signified through words.

Language sets primarily the limit of understanding in other ways. One example, which can be called a hermeneutical limit, will suffice. On the gate of Hell we read the memorable lines that "Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore; / fecemi la divina potestate, / la somma sapienza e il primo amore" (*Inf.* 3.4–6). The philosopher of modernity, Nietzsche, read these lines in his *Genealogy of Morals* with his customary recklessness and wondered, gleefully scandalized by the apparent contradiction, how Dante could ever cast the unspeakable horrors of Hell as the making of God's love and justice. Like many other interpreters of Dante, Nietzsche missed the point of the text and foreclosed linguistic ambiguities. The words at the gate of Hell, God's words of love, justice, wisdom, and power, in point of fact affirm the nature of Hell's seduction, the satanic ruse in waylaying people to think that that hovel of dread is just. This staging of misunderstanding in language recurs later in Hell when the moral topography of the City of Dis, the city

of evil and chaos, is planned according to the stiff principles of Aristotle's *Ethics* (*Inf.* 11.80). Above all, language's limits are drawn when Dante presses his language to its limits as he crosses the frontier of the "sayable" into the terrain of experiences lying beyond words.³

If for Dante his poetry is the metaphoric frontier providing perspectives of seeing and knowing under the all-seeing eye of God, for Longfellow his translation of Dante is the imaginative frontier, not in the sense of the narrowly political mythology of the frontier but as the path to an old and new wisdom, to the experience of old worlds that can become new. It allows him to join the likes of Emerson and his Bowdoin College roommate Hawthorne in redesigning America. The translation-as-frontier provided him with the "place" where he confronted the language of the "other," stood face to face with another poet, and met (and offered) resistance to his voice. By it he could bring Dante "home," make him the guest of his house, just as Washington had been before his time. No doubt, as his friends knew in the Wednesday evening conversations, the translation they pored over could never say what the "original" said, but Longfellow knew that his enterprise of making Dante into an American poet allowed him to reflect on a crucial chapter of American history. What I am suggesting is that Longfellow saw in Dante's poem a possible response to some of the great debates that were shaping the contours of nineteenth-century American modernity. The avatar of that debate was Emerson.

To Emerson's claim of being an "eyeball" capable of seeing it all, erasing all limits of his knowledge-as-experience as well as to the debate over the meaning of the natural world between Emerson and Hawthorne, Longfellow opposes Dante's view of a simultaneously Edenic and fallen nature. It is a view that recalls the spirit of *Hiawatha*. As a way of ending these remarks, let me briefly look at the passage in his extraordinary translation of *Purgatorio* 28.

Longing already to search in and round
The heavenly forest, dense and living green,
Which to the eyes tempered the new-born day,
Without more delay I left the bank,
Crossing the level country slowly, slowly
Over the soil, that everywhere breathed fragrance.
A gently breathing air, . . .

.

Yet not from their upright direction bent
So that the little birds upon their tops
Should cease the practice of their tuneful art;
But, with full-throated joy, the hours of prime
Singing received they in the midst of foliage
That made monotonous burden to their rhymes, . . .
(*Purg.* 28.1–18).⁴

Longfellow's rendition catches the unparalleled intricacy and intensity of Dante's representation of nature. The passage forges, through the image of pine trees of Ravenna, the American myth (in Emerson's dreams) of a primal natural language of animals, elements, and human beings. As in the Italian text, here too the forest is heavy with scent, the air vibrates with light and natural music engendered by the humming of birds, the rustling of leaves in the wind, the freshness of the air, and, later, the sparkle of the river as Matelda sings. For the pilgrim Dante, "the place" is a point of arrival where he begins to think anew and move on as he discovers that this nature, dreamed by poets through the centuries, is also the place of the fall of Adam. By listening to Dante and carrying him into his own native idiom, Longfellow insinuates himself between Emerson's hyperbolic natural optimism and Hawthorne's sense of fallen nature. Like Hawthorne, Longfellow understood the need for an imaginative quest into the historical depths of the New World, which they found, respectively, in Rome and in Dante. Longfellow joins the often strident conversation between the two colossi of American letters, and with great circumspection he went on to deliver his insight, gleaned from his favorite poet, that his own world exists by virtue of the poetry and its translation.

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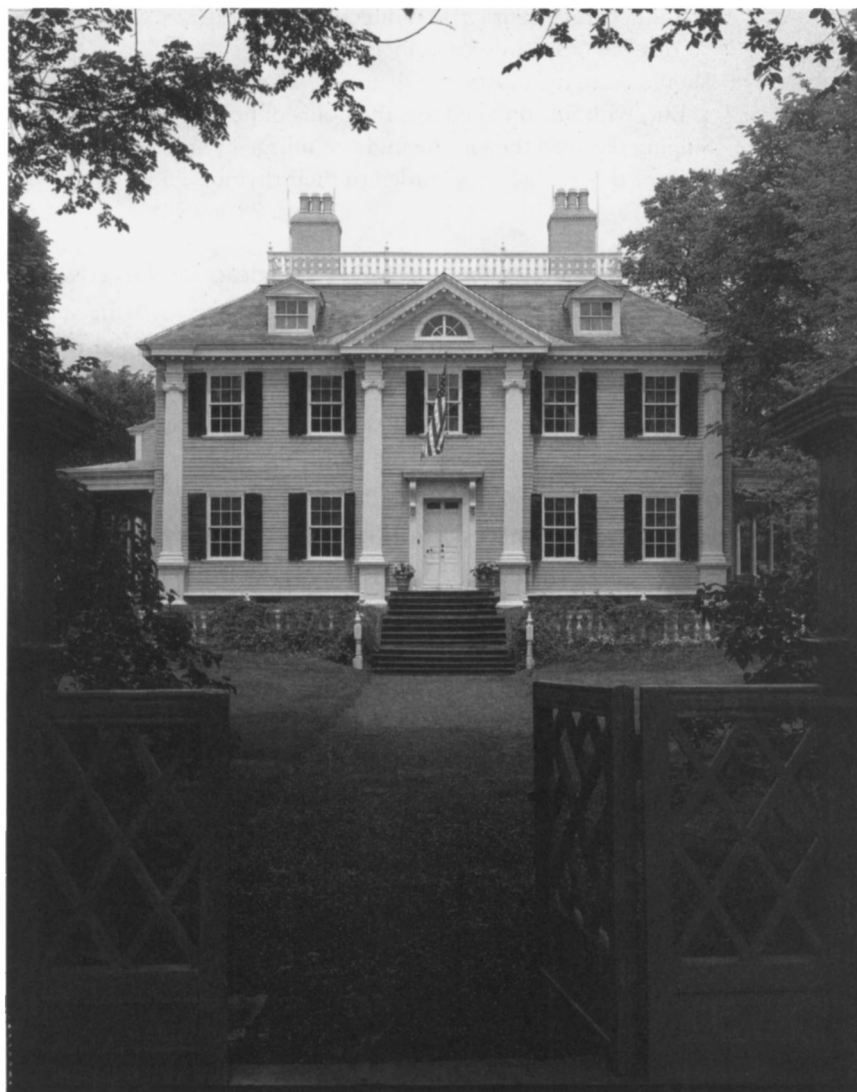
NOTES

1. See my "Afterword" in *Dante's Inferno: Translations by Twenty Contemporary Poets*, ed. Daniel Halpern (Hopewell, N.J.: Ecco Press, 1993), 159–68.

2. An extensive treatment of this concept is available in my *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), esp. 107–46.

3. For a sustained introduction to this issue of language, see Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

4. I am quoting from the anthology by A. Bartlett Giamatti, ed. *Dante in America: The First Two Centuries* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York, 1983). I am delighted to record my agreement with Giamatti's sense of the great value of Longfellow's translation of this canto.



Vassall-Craigie-Longfellow House, 105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts (façade). Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site. Courtesy National Park Service.

Longfellow's House and the Power of Place

JAMES M. SHEA¹

Dante marches on slowly and with decorum. In printing, or rather stereotyping, I have now reached the Tenth [Canto] of Paradiso. A little Club meets here every Wednesday evening—Lowell, Norton, and myself—with some times an outsider or two. We go over a Canto critically, and then have a supper. I wish we could have you with us. Take down your Dante and read the beginning of Paradiso XI.

Longfellow to Charles Sumner, January 17, 1866,
The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,
ed. Andrew Hilen (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 5:23.

The Dante Club comprised several scholars whom Henry Wadsworth Longfellow invited to review and comment on the proof-sheets of his translation of the *Divine Comedy*.² In addition to James Russell Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton—the core members of the group—attendees included such figures as James T. Fields, William Dean Howells, and Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. From October 1865 to June 1867 the informal club met nearly every Wednesday in Longfellow's study at 105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts.³ The house, which had served from July 1775 to April 1776 as headquarters for General George Washington during the Siege of Boston, became Longfellow's residence from 1837 to 1882.⁴ On the same premises Washington conferred with Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Artemus Ward, Nathanael Greene, Henry Knox, and others.

During Longfellow's residency his home served as an important gathering place for people from far and near, hosting luminaries such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Senator Charles Sumner, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Harriet

Beecher Stowe, Charles Dickens, Jenny Lind, Henry James, the Emperor of Brazil Dom Pedro II, Julia Ward Howe, and Oscar Wilde. In 1867, with the publication of the full three volumes, Longfellow became the first American to have translated the complete *Comedy* into English. The work was celebrated as the literary event of the season. Thirty-nine years earlier, while traveling in Italy at age twenty-one, Longfellow had received from George Washington Greene his first copy of the *Divine Comedy*, in three pocket-sized volumes. A year later, in 1829, he assumed the first professorship of modern languages at Bowdoin College in Maine, where he introduced the study of Italian, which included passages from Dante. In 1837 Longfellow was appointed by Harvard College as Smith Professor of Modern Languages and of Belles Lettres.⁵ As the second occupant of the chair, succeeding George Ticknor, he would offer courses in French, German, Spanish, and Italian.⁶ His efforts at translating the *Comedy* began as he prepared for lectures delivered in 1838.

The activities of the Dante Club did not end when the translation of the *Comedy* was completed. In 1881 the Dante Society was formed, with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as its first president. The inaugural meeting of the Society took place at Longfellow's house.⁷ On February 11, 1881, Charles Eliot Norton wrote to James Russell Lowell, who was then serving in London as ambassador to England, "Tonight I go to Longfellow's to attend the first meeting of the Dante Club, of which he has consented to be President."⁸

After Longfellow's death in March 1882, the ensuing two presidents of the Dante Society would be James Russell Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton. In May 1882 Norton read to the Society a tribute to its founding president: "The gratitude of our Society is due to him, both for the work he did in promoting the love and knowledge of the poet of whom we profess ourselves the students, and for his consenting to act as our President. His memory will be cherished in our Society with especial honor. In our Dante Library his bust shall stand opposite that of his and our Master."⁹

In 1972 Longfellow's descendants donated the house—with all its objects, furnishings, library, and family papers—to the National Park Service for the education and inspiration of the public. Most of the historic rooms retain their original fine and decorative arts and other belongings from the period of family occupancy (1837–1950). The poet's study, where the informally constituted Dante Club gathered in the 1860s and

where the Dante Society was founded in 1881, is regularly open to the public; the power of place is unmistakable when one views the room today. The 1864 statuette of Dante still stands above an eighteenth-century mirror, below which are positioned the table and chairs where the Dante Club met. Atop a nearby bookcase is a bronze bust of Virgil. Beneath the mirror sits a small eighteenth-century carved walnut casket in which Longfellow kept fragments of Dante's coffin and other intriguing artifacts.¹⁰ Much of the original library collection remains on-site: the 10,000 volumes include some 250 works related to Dante.¹¹

Today the house serves both as a destination for visitors and as a resource for students, teachers, and scholars from around the world. In addition to the approximately 35,000 objects and historic books preserved at the house, Longfellow's heirs left an extensive research archive; some 700,000 items, including papers of the poet and his extended family from the seventeenth through the mid-twentieth centuries, are held at the house today.¹² More than 600 research requests are received annually from scholars seeking to utilize the archives and collections, and each year another 40,000 people come to view the house and the formal garden and grounds.

The National Park Service continues the spirit of hospitality by hosting the Annual Meeting of the Dante Society of America each May. In 2008 the Society donated its own library to the house for purposes of long-term preservation and research; like the other archival materials, this fully-catalogued collection is accessible to scholars.¹³ For the general public, the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site sponsors a free series of family events, craft activities, old-fashioned games, musical performances, and poetry readings in the summer months. Lectures, student/teacher workshops, and dramatic presentations are offered year-round in the 1844 carriage house. The staff of the Site is pleased to welcome, by appointment, researchers interested in Dante, Longfellow, or the history of the Vassall-Craigie-Longfellow House and its occupants and visitors from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. The public is warmly invited to visit 105 Brattle Street, one of the great historic homes in America.¹⁴

*Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site
Cambridge, Massachusetts*

NOTES

1. Vincent Pollina's generous collaboration on this essay is gratefully acknowledged. Christian Dupont and Anita Israel kindly offered comments on early drafts.

2. For a discerning review of the history of the Dante Club and of Longfellow's activity as translator of the *Comedy*, see J. Chesley Mathews, "Mr. Longfellow's Dante Club," *Annual Reports of the Dante Society, with Accompanying Papers* 76 (1958), 23–35. Accessible through JSTOR at <www.jstor.org>.

3. The Vassall-Craigie-Longfellow House was built in 1759 for John Vassall, a wealthy royalist who fled to British protection on the eve of the American Revolution. In 1791 the structure was purchased by Andrew Craigie, Apothecary General during the Revolutionary War. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow rented rooms in the house from Craigie's widow Elizabeth beginning in 1837, and then, upon her death, sublet half of the house from Joseph Emerson Worcester, a tenant of the Craigie heirs. Boston industrialist Nathan Appleton purchased the home as a wedding gift when Longfellow married Nathan's daughter, Frances, in 1843. The poet lived there until his death in 1882. The dwelling was known to him and his family as "Craigie House"; in his correspondence, he whimsically refers to it as "Craigie Hall," "Craigie Castle," or "Castle Craigie." See, for example, Longfellow, *Letters*, 2:337, and 5:775. An account of the "History and Occupants of the Vassall-Craigie-Longfellow House" is posted at <lnhstest.brinkster.net/Level2/house/HouseEssay/Essay.html>. See also the web site of the Friends of the Longfellow House: <www.longfellowfriends.org>.

4. On December 22, 2010, by Act of Congress, the Longfellow National Historic Site was renamed the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site. See the *Dante Society Newsletter* 17, no. 2 (April 2011), 2, which is posted on the web site of the Dante Society of America at <www.dantesociety.org/N2011s.pdf>.

5. Carl L. Johnson, *Professor Longfellow of Harvard* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1944), pp. 14–15.

6. Longfellow also spoke or read Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Greek, Latin, Norwegian, Portuguese, Old Provençal, and Swedish.

7. The group took the name "Dante Society of America" upon its incorporation in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in December, 1954. For further background, see George H. Gifford, "A History of the Dante Society," *Annual Reports of the Dante Society, with Accompanying Papers* 74 (1956), 3–27, and Anthony J. DeVito, "The First Hundred Years of the Dante Society," *Dante Studies* 100 (1982), 99–132.

8. Sara Norton and M. A. DeWolfe Howe, eds., *The Letters of Charles Eliot Norton With Biographical Comment* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 2:116.

9. "Remarks of Mr. Norton at the Annual Meeting of the Dante Society, May 16, 1882," *First Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 16, 1882* (Cambridge, Mass. 1882), 25.

10. See "Spotlight on an Object," *Longfellow House Bulletin* 6, no. 2 (December 2002), 8, which is archived on the web site of the Friends of the Longfellow House at <www.longfellowfriends.org/bulletins/Vol6No2.pdf>.

11. In addition to 10,000 volumes from Longfellow's library (including most of those related to Dante), the holdings of the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site encompass some 4,000 books once owned by the poet's descendants. In 1893, 1894, and 1960, approximately 1,000 other volumes from Longfellow's library were acquired by the Houghton Library, Harvard University, where they may be consulted by scholars. For further information on Longfellow's holdings pertaining to Dante, see J. Chesley Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," ed. Christian Y. Dupont, in the present volume. See also Dennis C. Marnon, "Longfellow and Dante in Houghton Library Collections," *Caxtonian* 8, no. 7 (July 2000), 7.

12. Most of Longfellow's papers were acquired by Houghton Library, Harvard University, in 1954; other papers of the poet and of his descendants are held in the archives of the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

13. See the *Dante Society Newsletter* 14, no. 2 (April 2008), 1. The issue is posted on the web site of the Dante Society of America at <www.dantesociety.org/N2008s.pdf>.

14. For information on hours, programs, guided tours, and the archives and collections themselves, see <www.nps.gov/long/>. Scholars wishing to consult the archives should send an inquiry to the e-mail or the postal addresses listed on the web site.

Grace of Action: Dante in the Life of Longfellow

KATHLEEN VERDUIN

After his feet had laid aside the haste
Which mars the dignity of every act . . .
Purg. 3.10–11, Longfellow translation

What Emerson recognized in 1852 as “the new vogue given to the genius of Dante” permeated the imagination of nineteenth-century American authors, and the plenitude of their collective archive, rich with diaries and letters as well as published works, reveals the contours of individual appropriation as well. Almost invariably, the sporadic allusions left by literary artists of Longfellow’s generation yield strikingly consistent patterns, exposing an assumed conjunction between some particular facet of the work of Dante and their own habitual focus of concern. Emerson, inspired by the prospect of a national literature, installed Dante as “a new and prodigious person” who had sired a literary language and might therefore prefigure the American writer to come; Emerson’s friend Margaret Fuller, so emotionally isolated that even the kindly Longfellow, in a journal entry of December 11, 1845, could call her “a dreary woman,” restlessly scanned the *Vita nuova* for corroboration of her “intuitions as to the *new life of love*”; Hawthorne and Melville linked the poet of *Inferno* with moral and metaphysical darkness; and Walt Whitman, a self-professed “rough,” preferred to read Dante outdoors.¹

Longfellow’s subjective engagement with Dante seems by comparison at first opaque. Unlike most of his literary contemporaries, Longfellow (1807–1882) was involved with the *Commedia* professionally as well as privately, teaching courses at Harvard, producing an entire translation,

and promoting study of the text through all the avenues open to him; his involvement with Dante was complicated, and to some extent perhaps emotionally distanced, by absorption into his eventual role as America's accepted poet laureate. Nor did the advance of his reputation undermine his aversion to self-display: Annie Fields, wife of Longfellow's friend and publisher James T. Fields, recalled a guest at one of her famous dinners turning to the poet and demanding, "Longfellow, tell us about yourself, you never talk about yourself," to which a smiling Longfellow reportedly replied, "No, I believe I never do."² Yet his network of references inscribes its own unmistakable story, confirming that Longfellow too took hold of Dante in ways that served his preoccupations, not simply with literature but with conduct. By design or by instinct, he aligned the *Commedia* with a coherent vision, in perfect step with the culture that sustained him and intuitively as rhythmic as his own dactyls and trochees: of hours and days lived out in steady productivity, tranquil domesticity, and the natural integration of poetry into the metrics of daily life.

I

Longfellow came of age in the years of the European Dante revival: the first English translations appeared near the end of the eighteenth century, and the influential version by Henry Francis Cary was issued between 1805 and 1814, precipitating a wave of enthusiasm that lost no time in spreading to American shores. The medievalism of the early nineteenth century elevated Dante to the pedestal he has never since relinquished: especially in New England, well-bred American readers assumed the Italian poet into their literary pantheon. As K. P. Van Anglen has shown, Boston periodicals like the *Monthly Anthology* and the *North American Review* featured essays on Dante as early as 1805, and the Unitarian class into which Longfellow was born laid claim to Dante for their own political and social ends; even at the relative remoteness of Portland, Maine, the library of Longfellow's father included copies of the Cary translation and that of Henry Boyd.³ The young Longfellow was accordingly primed to embrace the *Commedia* when George Washington Greene (1811–1883)—who would also incite a passion for Dante in another mutual friend (later the senator from Massachusetts), Charles Sumner—presented him with a copy when he and Longfellow met during Longfellow's first

visit to Italy (1827–1828).⁴ “At midnight, when the crowd is gone,” Longfellow wrote in *Outre-Mer* (1833), his account of his travels, “I retire to my chamber and, poring over the gloomy pages of Dante . . . protract my vigil till the morning star is in the sky” (*Works*, 7:239).⁵

Certainly Longfellow was susceptible to the prevailing iconography of Dante as romantically morose; one of the sonnets he composed in 1865 still projects the standard “poet saturnine” (*Works*, 3:141), and in the ante-bellum period he would discern Dante’s features in the tenebrous visage of Daniel Webster: “He always reminds me of Dante, though he has written no *Divina Commedia*” (journal, November 5, 1850; see also January 9, 1840).⁶ But his lifelong dedication to the *Commedia* had ultimately little to do with such constructions. Instead, the testimony of his writings shows him continually applying the poem to a personal cohort of virtues, most prominently to the pronounced work ethic that surfaces again and again in his journals and correspondence. For Longfellow, I propose, the figure of Dante presided first of all over the question of time and its proper employment in meaningful labor: an absolute so central to Longfellow’s self-fashioning that his engagement with Dante is incomprehensible outside it. The juxtaposition is succinctly exemplified in a cluster of references from Longfellow’s forty-second year. A letter for April 4, 1848, cites *Purgatorio* 12.84—“Every morning I say to myself the words of Dante, ‘Pensa che questo dì mai non raggiorna’” (*Letters*, 3:167)—and the quotation recurs as epigraph for his journal the same year; in Longfellow’s little-known novel *Kavanagh* (1849), likewise, the eponymous protagonist mounts on his study door “the vigorous line of Dante, Think that To-day will never dawn again! that it might always serve as a salutation and memento to him as he entered” (*Works*, 8:361).⁷ The critic Georges Poulet offered some fifty years ago a study of how classic American writers conceptualized time, Emerson affirming a deified transcendent moment, Hawthorne recoiling from an oppressive past, Melville a protesting “Job of temporality.” It is indicative of Longfellow’s diminished twentieth-century status that Poulet unapologetically ignores him.⁸ But Longfellow may have contemplated time more intently than any of his contemporaries, and the inseparability of time from work was of course an issue of long standing in his native region. In his classic analysis *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), Max Weber recognized that in Puritan society “waste of time” loomed as “the first and deadliest of sins,” an insight easily verified. In *The Saint’s Everlasting Rest* (1850),

throughout the nineteenth century still widely read in New England, the English Puritan Richard Baxter counseled, for example, that “the children of the kingdom should have no time for trifles, especially when they are employed in the affairs of the kingdom”; the colonial minister John Cotton, in *The Way of Life* (1641), warned that “if thou hast no calling, tending to publique good, thou art an uncleane beast.” In the more lurid Puritan documents, idleness is linked to sexual transgression, as in Samuel Danforth’s sermon “The Cry of Sodom Enquired Into” (1674): “The standing waters putrifie, and grow corrupt and noisome. The untilled ground is soon overgrown with Stinking Weeds. . . . No business, debauchery.”⁹

It is true that while Longfellow’s early journals are dotted with perfunctory self-reproaches like, “Really, I accomplish little in the course of the week” (April 23, 1838; see also *Letters*, 1:104, 335), in the main he shows nothing of this kind of residual Puritan anxiety, nothing even of his Bowdoin classmate Nathaniel Hawthorne’s sense of black-browed forebears denouncing their descendant as an idler, “a writer of story-books.” At seventeen, in response to a more congenial Unitarianism, Longfellow had formulated a view of religion “as a cheerful and social companion, given to us to go through life with us from childhood to the grave, and to make us happier here as well as hereafter, and not as a stern and chiding task-master” (December 18, 1824; *Letters*, 1:97–98).¹⁰ Nevertheless, Unitarianism too endorsed the primacy of work, no longer as a deterrent to vice but an element in the process of “self-culture”: in the words of the Rev. Dr. William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), the movement’s acknowledged founder and a classmate of Longfellow’s father, a good worker “is continually building up in himself one of the greatest principles of morality and religion. Every blow on the anvil, on the earth, or whatever material he works upon, contributes something more to the perfection of his nature.”¹¹ Longfellow’s apprehension of time remains closely connected to this multilayered regard for the spirituality of faithful labor. The locus classicus is obviously “The Village Blacksmith” (1840; *Works*, 1:64–66), a poem Longfellow told his father might be considered, “if you please, as a song in praise of your ancestor at Newbury” (October 25, 1840; *Letters*, 2:259): “Week in, week out, from morn till night, / You can hear his bellows blow; / You can hear him sway his heavy sledge, / With measured beat and slow; / Like a sexton ringing the village bell, / When the evening sun is low.” An exemplary worker—the

poem is latterly approved in William Bennett's *Book of Virtues* as "the character of true, honest, and willing labor"¹²—the Blacksmith also conducts his life *sub specie aeternitatis*, as we infer from his church attendance and fancied picture of his departed wife "singing in Paradise," and the very monotony of his existence becomes in itself sublime: "Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing, / Onward through life he goes; / Each morning sees some task begin, / Each evening sees its close; / Something attempted, something done, / Has earned a night's repose."

The poem's inevitable moral—"Thus at the flaming forge of life / Our fortunes must be wrought"—may strike us now as facile, platitudinous in the manner of a bygone idiom; but its authentic root in Longfellow's developing sense of vocation is suggested, as Jill Anderson has noticed, by sentiments from his 1838 public lecture "Literature and the Literary Life": "It was with no sarcastic meaning that the Icelanders of old called the Poet a Rhyme-Smith. He is God's workman; and amid the smoke and sparks about him, on his sound anvil forges the broad shield of Truth and weapons of her warfare."¹³ A similar assertion of purpose appears in an earlier poem, the well-known "Psalm of Life" (1838; *Works*, 1:20–22). According to a headnote, Longfellow described this poem as "a voice from my inmost heart, at a time when I was rallying from depression." The death in 1835 of his first wife, Mary Storer Potter, in a pension in Rotterdam during Longfellow's second European excursion (and his flagging courtship of Fanny Appleton, whom he met in Switzerland the following year), might have been enough to leave the young poet depressed. Yet with its exhortation "Life is real! Life is earnest!" the piece seems also to intimate, albeit covertly, the resolution of an internal crisis and a resultant discovery of creative identity. In a journal entry for March 7, 1836, Longfellow had set down his irritation with Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743), "when he calls it absurd to think of leaving a name behind us," and a few weeks earlier (January 22), apropos of a searching conversation with Greene (*Letters*, 1:547), he had articulated a manifesto:

Literary ambition! away with this destroyer of peace and quietude and the soul's self-possession! The scholar should have a higher and holier aim than this. He should struggle after truth; he should forget himself in communion with the great minds of the ages; and when he writes it should be, not to immortalize himself, but to make a salutary and lasting impression on the minds of others. . . . Let the object, then, be, not to build ourselves up, but to build up others, and leave our mark upon the age we live in, each according to the measure of his talent. To

oppose error and vice, and make mankind more in love with truth and virtue, this is a far higher motive of action than mere literary ambition.

“A Psalm of Life” climaxes therefore in a call to action—“Act,—act in the living Present!”—the mandate to work that heartens the “forlorn and shipwrecked brother” and simultaneously thwarts mortality by leaving, in the famous metaphor, “footprints in the sands of time.” Rendered stale to us now by over-familiarity, the image is in fact deft, for in Longfellow’s percipience the worthy goals of ambition, literary and otherwise, could only be accomplished step by step: “But to act, that each to-morrow / Find us farther than to-day.” The lines anticipate the stirring admonition of a later poem, “The Ladder of St. Augustine” (1858; *Works*, 3:20–21): “We have not wings, we cannot soar; / But we have feet to scale and climb / By slow degrees, by more and more, / The cloudy summits of our time.” Achievement, these poems alike advise, is for all its glory no dizzying meteor or orgy of self-dramatization—and Longfellow had expressed early, in an essay for the *North American Review*, his aversion to an era when “every city, town, and village had its little Byron, its self-tormenting scoffer at morality, its gloomy misanthropist in song”—but soberly pedestrian and incremental, the “something attempted, something done” that earns the Blacksmith his nightly rest.¹⁴

Over the course of his oeuvre, Longfellow continued to envision artistic creation through what he referred to in his poem “Nuremberg” (1844; *Works*, 1:197–201) as “the nobility of labor,—the long pedigree of toil,” praising in the same poem the work of Albrecht Dürer and the Renaissance “cobbler-poet” Hans Sachs: “As the weaver plied the shuttle, wove he too his mystic rhyme, / And the smith his iron measures hammered to the anvil’s chime.” Like Jill Anderson, Matthew Gartner has recently illuminated this topos, noting Longfellow’s implicit commitment to “artisanal ideals of hard work and pride of craft.”¹⁵ But the operational dimension of Longfellow’s metaphors, I would emphasize, is consistently their dignified regularity, the “measured beat and slow” of the Blacksmith, and their superimposition on the undeviating rhythms of time—what Paul Flemming, the young American protagonist of Longfellow’s transparently autobiographical novel *Hyperion* (1839), apprehends as “the shadow on the dial, the striking of the clock, the running of the sand, day and night, summer and winter, months, years, centuries” (*Works*, 8:109)—that will not be hurried. Clocks and hourglasses abound in Longfellow’s writings:

in *Hyperion*, for example, he depicts the clock in the Kaufhaus belfry in Coblenz, a human head whose jaws snap shut on the hour as if to admonish, "Time was; Time is; Time is past" (*Works*, 8:24–25), and later "The Old Clock on the Stairs" (1845; *Works*, 1:231–33) "says to all,—'Forever—never! Never—forever!'" By its very office, however, the horological mechanism tames and metes out time, absorbing human activity into a stately *ordo*. "Our national character wants the dignity of repose," Flemming complains as he wanders through Germany. "We seem to live in the midst of a battle,—there is such a din, such a hurrying to and fro." The solution, he grasps, is that "therefore should every man wait,—should bide his time. Not in listless idleness, not in useless pastime, not in querulous dejection, but in constant, steady, cheerful endeavors, always willing and fulfilling, and accomplishing his task, that, when the occasion comes, he may be equal to the occasion" (*Works*, 8:68–69).

Or, as "A Psalm of Life" has it, "Learn to labor and to wait." This patient accommodation of ambition to time's unfaltering beat is perhaps predictable in a man whose earliest recorded wish was that his father buy him a drum (January 18, 1814; *Letters*, 1:26), and it is implicitly restated, I suspect, in the much later "Paul Revere's Ride" (1863; *Works*, 4:25–29), where the nation's rescue is effected by a methodical segmentation: "It was twelve by the village clock," "It was one by the village clock," "It was two by the village clock." Longfellow's governing concept is therefore not simply labor, but *day-labor*: the Blacksmith's diurnal chores fall in line with "The Building of the Ship" (1850; *Works*, 1:246–57)—"Day by day the vessel grew"—or the motion of the potter's wheel in *Kéramos* (1878; *Works*, 3:221–34): "Turn, turn, my wheel! What is begun / At daybreak must at dark be done." Initially oppressive in Longfellow's complaint to Greene (March 25, 1836; *Letters*, 1:543), in the grief following Mary's death, that "my favored and cherished literary plans are either abandoned, or looked upon as a task which duty requires me to work out, as a day-laborer," the analogy seems to have become at some point almost talismanic, a formula for peace of mind. Bells, already audible in "The Village Blacksmith" and resonant through the pages of Longfellow's collected works—"The Belfry of Bruges," the familiar "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," "The Bells of Lynn," and the last poem he composed, "The Bells of San Blas" (*Works*, 1:189–92; 3:132–33, 136–37, 290–92)—toll in solemn witness to the passage of time but signal also, as in the peaceable ambience of village life evoked in "Pegasus in Pound"

(1850; *Works*, 1:280–82), “the daily call to labor.” As his father before him had occasionally drawn upon agricultural experience when he argued cases before the bench, Longfellow grounded his verse—and the word itself, as Seamus Heaney reminds us, suggests as well a plowman’s turn—in the plodding regularity of common toil and the immemorial rhythms of night and day.¹⁶

The lines from Dante that Longfellow apparently favored above all others are informed and contextualized by this doctrine of steady work to which he had won through: “Quando li piedi suoi lasciar la fretta, / che l’onestade ad ogn’atto dismaga” (*Purg.* 3.10–11). Poetic achievement was attainable, the subtext of Longfellow’s writings directs us, not by the hubris of wings but patiently, with feet—and with feet that refused to hurry. His friend George Ticknor (1791–1871), Longfellow observed in a letter of August 2, 1842 (*Letters*, 2:452) which contains what is apparently his first invocation of Dante’s line, was commendably working on his *History of Spanish Literature* “with none of that speed ‘which mars all decency of action.’”

II

The challenge of literary aspiration, to put it another way, resided in its seemingly incorporation into the quotidian, its habituation to the “securely bourgeois existence,” in the phrase of Lawrence Buell, that Longfellow understandably desired as well.¹⁷ In 1829 Longfellow began to teach at Bowdoin, and in 1836, after the trip clouded by Mary’s death, he moved as a boarder into Craigie House on Brattle Street, the mansion he would later own, to succeed Ticknor as Smith Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard. But “decency of action” proved elusive; within a few years of his appointment, Longfellow’s journal shows him haunted by the numbing specter of the “fat mill-horse, grinding round with blinkers on” (September 10, 1839) that he feared to become by fifty. Again, the work of Dante offered him a point of reference: on his thirty-fifth birthday, in the poem “Mezzo Cammin” (1843; *Works*, 1:234–35), he lamented, “Half of my life is gone, and I have let / The years slip by me and have not fulfilled / The aspiration of my youth, to build / Some tower of song with lofty parapet.” His journals for these years function as a running act of self-assessment. “I am in despair at the swift flight of time,” he complained (October 11, 1846), “and the utter impossibility I feel to lay hold

of anything permanent. All my hours and days go to perishable things and no line is written that may last. College takes up half the time. . . . I have hardly a moment to think of my own writings, and am thus cheated out of life's finest hours." Later that month (October 20) he reiterated, "Completely exhausted to-day by College work. . . . Nothing permanent, nothing elaborate, nothing of what I feel myself capable of doing." "I am never satisfied with the day," he wrote on November 1, 1850, "that does not add some lines at least to my poems," and the quotation from *Purgatorio* hovered in his consciousness: on February 7, 1853, he excused himself for a minor misprision by apologizing, "It must have been from haste, which Dante says 'mars all decency of action'" (*Letters*, 3:372). In 1854, buoyed by the sales of *Evangeline*, he finally resigned his position, as he wrote in his journal, out of "a perpetual state of exasperation at seeing my life corroded by such petty cares, so that nothing can come of it" (April 13). On April 19 of that year, he could record in his journal with no shade of regret, "At eleven o'clock, in No. 16 University Hall, delivered my last lecture, the last I shall ever deliver here or anywhere else. It was upon the last Canto of Dante's *Inferno*, with brief account of the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*."

At the same time, however, his quarter-century of academic employment had also nurtured Longfellow's talent by ensuring a stable, predictable schedule; his son Ernest remembered his father as "very methodical and careful in his ways," and as Longfellow's fellow Dante scholar Charles Eliot Norton (1827–1908) observed in a late memorial, upon the acquisition of his post at Harvard Longfellow's life "soon settled into a pleasant regularity."¹⁸ Longfellow's engagement with Dante in the years of his professorship partook of this regularity; though he confessed on December 10, 1837, that Dante "excites me more than any other poet" (*Letters*, 2:51), the excitement was necessarily parceled out piecemeal in the syllabus. A character in Longfellow's late poetic drama *Michael Angelo* (1872) confutes the sculptor's reverence for "the greatest of all poets" with the scornful retort, "And the dullest; / And only to be read in episodes" (*Works*, 6:115). While the speaker here is of course opprobrious, his words underscore a salient feature of the *Commedia*, its orderly arrangement into self-contained cantos, amenable to the measured doses of classroom lecture. A sampling of entries from Longfellow's journals document this pattern: "Closed my lecture on Dante's *Purgatory* by an analysis of the whole" (March 21, 1838); "Second lecture on Dante. I confess to my

shame that I cannot throw much zeal into the work. It has become an old story to me. I am tired" (April 28, 1846); "This term I have three classes: two in Molière and one in Dante. No college work could be pleasanter" (March 1, 1847); "Finished the 'Inferno' with class, and am not sorry. Painful Tragedy called by its author Comedy" (May 24, 1847); "I have now a lesson in Dante at five in the afternoon. I rather like it, at this season" (June 9, 1847); "Work enough on my hands, with lectures in Dante. . . . Wonderful poet! How truly good thou art! What a privilege it is to interpret thee to young hearts" (March 6, 1849); "The bell of the Episcopal Church feebly sobbing. Is it Good Friday? If so it is a coincidence for me; as I lecture in the Inferno Canto II" (March 22, 1850); "Analysis of the 'Divina Commedia' at lecture: an hour without notes. I am glad I have got through with Dante, for the immense mass of materials—the bois flotée, or driftwood, of so many biographies and commentaries is very embarrassing" (October 3, 1850); "Last lesson in Dante. I told the class they had finished the Inferno perhaps in more senses than one, but they must not think immediately to enter the Paradiso. The next Canto [*sic*] of the Poem and of Life, would be the Purgatorio, of which they would have a prelude in the Examination on Wednesday!" (June 16, 1851).

Such jocular references suggest Longfellow's appeal as a teacher: the orator Edward Everett Hale remembered, perhaps inaccurately, "I think attendance was voluntary, but I know I never missed a lecture."¹⁹ According to his brother Samuel, Longfellow's pedagogical method for his classes in foreign literature had been to "read the book into English to his class, with a running commentary and illustration,"²⁰ and it was the discipline of the classroom that prompted his first published translations from the *Commedia*, "The Celestial Pilot," "The Terrestrial Paradise," and "Beatrice" (passages from *Purg.* 2, 28, and 30–31), which appeared in his first volume of poetry, *Voices of the Night* (1839). Even outside the classroom, however, Longfellow was harnessing Dante's poem to a dutiful round of daily work. In the spring of 1843, languishing over Fanny's continued indifference toward him, he took up translating *Purgatorio* again to drive off indolence; the project clearly heartened him, not least for its accommodation to routine. As he wrote to Charles Eliot Norton's mother, Catharine Eliot Norton, on March 21 (*Letters*, 2:521), after chatting about local goings-on, "How different from this gossip is the Divine Dante, with which I begin the morning! I write a few lines every day

before breakfast. It is the first thing I do,—the morning prayer—the keynote of the day. . . . I really have but a few moments to devote to it daily, yet daily a stone—small or great is laid on the pile.” In “Days with Longfellow,” a memoir published shortly after the poet’s death, Longfellow’s friend Samuel Gray Ward provided the surprisingly homely details of the translation’s execution: “It was [Longfellow’s] habit during the boiling of his coffee-kettle, to work, at a standing-desk, upon a translation of Dante. So soon as the kettle hissed, he folded his portfolio, not to resume that work until the following morning.”²¹

With some pointed encouragement from the sympathetic Mrs. Norton, Fanny relented in May, and the couple celebrated their wedding in July.²² By Thanksgiving Longfellow was still picking at *Purgatorio*; the activity, he observed to the German writer Ferdinand Freiligrath on November 24, 1843 (*Letters*, 2:551), “is like running a plough share through the soil of one’s mind. . . . Still, it sometimes seems to me like an excuse for being lazy,—like leaning on another man’s shoulders.” A note on the manuscript reads, “Only a rough sketch, not to be printed on any account. Burn! burn! burn!,” but the cantos from *Voices of the Night* were republished in Longfellow’s landmark anthology *The Poetry and Poets of Europe* in 1845. A decade later, to combat another spell of apathy, he revisited the work, noting in his journal for February 1, 1853, “In weariness of spirit, and despair of writing anything original, I turned again today to dear old Dante; and resumed my translation of the *Purgatorio*, where I left it in 1843! Find great delight in the work. It diffused its benediction throughout the day.” In the weeks following, Longfellow’s regular jottings charted his progress: “In the morning a few lines of Dante to sweeten the day” (February 2); “Dante in the morning as usual. After all it is only a mask to hide my unwillingness or rather inability to work. But it is very pleasant, and I shall go on with it, till I finish the *Purgatory*” (February 11); “Dante goes on bravely” (February 21); “Birth-day. Forty-six years old. Finished [Canto] XXXI and began XXXII” (February 27). As he wrote to Charles Sumner, “Dante in the morning, (for I have betaken me to translating him by way of comfort and consolation in despair of doing anything original). . . . So pass the days!” (February 15, 1853; *Letters*, 2:374). By dint of perseverance and the systematic self-assignment of one canto per diem, Longfellow finished his rendering of *Purgatorio* by the first of March. The academic term began two days later, but Longfellow could reflect in his journal with satisfaction, “I have not

been wholly idle. Let the completed *Purgatorio* speak for me" (March 3). In proper perspective, and with due regard to "decency of action," the work of hours and days formed not the futile circles of the mill-horse but an upward spiral. And with its unhurried progression of mornings and evenings graced by prayers and hymns, and most obviously by its steady ascent "al som de la scalina" (26:146, *Works*, 10:133), *Purgatorio* was the canticle Longfellow carried closest to his heart.

III

If the *Commedia* was successfully absorbed into Longfellow's work ethic, it also yielded forage for his affirmation of domesticity. It is clear that Longfellow respected the contemporary ideal of the genteel lady. Clara Crowninshield, the young woman who accompanied Henry and Mary to Europe in 1835, recorded in her diary, "They had been discussing the propriety or the necessity of a lady's being acquainted with domestic concerns. Henry thought a wife should know nothing of such physical concerns—he would rather dine on bread and water than eat the nicest dinner in the world, if his wife had been obliged to cook it for him."²³ In a lecture for May 22, 1838, Longfellow praised Dante for "female portraits drawn with exquisite delicacy" and remarked with approval, "I do not remember in all his writings a single sarcasm against women."²⁴ In *Hyperion* the lovesick Paul Flemming watches Mary Ashburton, a disingenuous alias for the as yet unclaimed Fanny, as "her beauteous form passed like the form of Beatrice through Dante's heaven" (*Works*, 8:196–97); the day of their engagement (May 10, 1843) and its successive anniversaries are habitually marked in his journal as "Vita Nova," and Christoph Irmscher has written with sensitivity of Longfellow's association, entirely honorific, between Fanny and her nominal prototype Francesca da Rimini.²⁵ Enraptured as he may have been, however, Longfellow looked forward to married life as an essentially level terrain: as he confided to his sister Anne soon after the engagement, "Now the Future opens its long closed gates into pleasant fields and lands of quiet, and the troubled spirit findeth its perfect rest" (May 21, 1843; *Letters*, 2:536). While the expectations of domesticity might have posed distractions for others, Longfellow's inclinations enjoined him to combine artistic and familial in a single space, to reject the romantic's solitary garret for a book-lined study at home, its

boundaries permeable to invasion, as famously commemorated in “The Children’s Hour” (1863; *Works*, 3:64–65), by a growing procession of affectionate offspring.²⁶ And it was Longfellow’s good fortune that a mutual familiarity with Dante demonstrably felicitated his relation with his second wife: the comfortable years of their marriage are characteristically marked with such instances as the rainy Sunday when Henry and Fanny, as he reported in his journal, read to their sons “till we were tired. Then to ourselves a canto or two of Dante’s ‘Paradiso’” (April 7, 1853).

As with the duties of the classroom, the security of the hearthside could foster literary production by the very regularity in which Longfellow had evidently come to place his trust—and the self-contained cantos of the *Commedia* made it equally suitable, like chapters of the Bible in previous generations, for daily household reading. The social history of Massachusetts in the nineteenth century is decked with references to Dante’s incorporation into domestic routine; representative is the diary entry of Anna Barker Ward, wife of the Boston banker Samuel Gray Ward (not to be confused with the friend of the same name mentioned above), “I highly enjoy my canto of Dante every morning with Sam” (January 13, 1840).²⁷ As Ronald and Mary Zboray have written, the appropriation of literature in antebellum New England typically “unfolded in the often dense networks of kin, friends, and neighbors, deeply imbuing it with social relations and implicating it in them. Most basically, however, literature supported family life and socializing. This was especially true when people read materials out loud to others—the most common type of reading practice. . . . People talked so much about literature that authors became like old friends, a part of the daily social fabric.”²⁸ Richard Bushman points out that the nineteenth-century domestication of gentility, particularly with its emphasis on edifying books, “had the effect of putting women at the center of genteel performance”: Samuel Ward, remembering in “Days with Longfellow” the excitement caused by “A Psalm of Life,” observed similarly that “many of the matrons of our city [New York] and their young daughters committed the lyrical treasure to memory, and thus formed the nucleus of that expanding circle of English humanity to which so many of Longfellow’s future verses became household words.”²⁹ It is worth noting here as well that Catharine Eliot Norton, herself the translator of Silvio Pellico’s *Le mie prigioni*, had apparently suggested the translation Longfellow undertook in 1843 (*Letters*, 2:514).

Frances Elizabeth Appleton (1817–1861), daughter of one of the richest manufacturers in Boston, was, in keeping with her station, highly literate; as a girl she had attended Elizabeth Peabody's progressive school and at times endured the appellation of bluestocking.³⁰ Her papers, housed at the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, help document the course of her interest in Dante. Thanks to her father's association with Richard Henry Wilde (1789–1847), then at work on his never-finished "The Life and Times of Dante,"³¹ she knew enough about the poet to appreciate the Sasso di Dante in Florence and disapprove his monument in Santa Croce—"the huge chalky one of Dante is in very bad taste"—during the family tour to Europe in 1836, when she was also treated to an examination of fine editions of the *Commedia* in repositories like the Ducal Palace in Mantua.³² Her serious study of the text was initiated on December 17, 1840, when she engaged the services of Pietro Bachi (1787–1853), one of several political refugees who had found employment at Harvard during the 1820s.³³ Fanny's excitement was genuine and immediate: two days later she noted in her journal, "What a creation to look at with fresh eyes and an enthusiastic soul. Am glad to have kept it till now." On 22 December she wrote, "Entirely wrapped up in Dante," and on Christmas Eve, "Read with Bachi the 4th and 5th Cantos of Inferno. Exquisite episode of Francesca, such a flash of light against the dark horrors." On December 29, still entranced, she read "the magnificent episode of Farinata in Dante. Am more and more amazed that such [illegible] shocks not the imagination, his hands alone would make it to work."³⁴ In a letter dated January 25, 1841, she told a favorite cousin, Isaac Appleton Jewett,

I am every day plunging into the very depths of the "Inferno," looking down on the fiery sepulchers where the nobly grand Farinata glares, come avesse l'inferno in gran dispetto, or admiring the majestic flame which enwraps Ulysses like a cloak. . . . As I have touched on Dante I must give my enthusiasm vent a while, for this is like the opening of the seventh seal to me, this book—a new revelation (I have never read it before as a whole), and truly it may be called "a page torn from the Apocalypse," as Motley says of "Faust"—such supernatural language and conceptions it flames with. If an Italian I should believe it like the Gospel, its stern simplicity and majesty have such a stamp of divine authority, more than Milton, I think, with his poetical vagueness. It is like the testimony of an eyewitness, and if not executed so wonderfully, its formal arrangements would shock the imagination. I read it with a warm-souled Italian who explains admirably to me the different allusions, and many charming little flights to "bella Italia" are

we tempted to thereby. But this is too gigantesque a subject to be emballé in a letter.³⁵

In the first year of her marriage to Longfellow, Fanny's journal records numerous incidents of informal readings in their home—Charles Sumner's rendition of "Plato's Divine Dialogues," her reading of Jameson's translation of Danish ballads to Henry, and then on March 19, 1844, "Read Henry in the evening the ancient epic of Germany, the 'Nibelungen Lied.' . . . What a wild but vivid picture of the olden time with its gorgeous splendor." Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit* followed in April. It is clear, however, that Dante held pride of place in her imagination. In May she received as a gift from her brother Tom Appleton—who would later take part in séances, confiding, "I confess I never felt so near that great gate through which Dante seems to have passed"—the "very beautiful engraving of Scheffer's Francesca da Rimini" that Longfellow would later, as his journal confirms (March 15, 1847), exhibit to his Harvard students. "Infinite sorrow in her lovely face," Fanny sympathized, "as she leans against the breast of him who 'mai da me non fia diviso' (*Inf.* 5.135), and their graceful figures gleam against the eternal night like stars." A few months later the Longfellows were paid a visit by Hawthorne, prompting Fanny to observe, "Hawthorne has a fine manly heart but is the most shy and silent of men. The freest conversation did not thaw more than a monosyllable and we discussed Art glibly enough. I really pity a person under this spell of reserve—he must long to utter his thoughts and feel a magic ban upon so doing, as Dante's poor sinners could not weep through their frozen eyelids."³⁶ Fanny's remarks indicate an easy familiarity with Dante's text and a shared perspective with her husband, the probable effect of frequent reference within the domestic setting: her 1848 journal of her children's activities, the "Chronicle of Craigie Castle," bears as epigraph the quotation selected the same year by Henry, "Pensa che questo dì mai non raggiorna" (*Purg.* 12.84).³⁷

IV

"I can neither read nor write in a hurry," Longfellow admitted again on March 11, 1861 (*Letters*, 4:222), "for, as Dante says, 'haste mars all decency of action.'" The placid life was not to last. Fanny's catastrophic death by fire on July 9, 1861, is indited in Longfellow's journal by the

mute witness of a row of crosses, followed a few weeks later by a transcription of lines from Tennyson's "To J. S.": "Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace." I find it striking that Longfellow's next journal entry, sometime in August, stations the event in a grand scenario of staged temporality: "So closes the Second Act of Life's Drama, and the Third begins!" Even—or perhaps especially—at such a climacteric, the poet was moved to schematize his personal history into modules; he would later muse on the coincidence of its breakdown into eighteen-year intervals (January 17, 1879; *Letters*, 6:436). Not surprisingly, the protracted period of Longfellow's grief reveals his efforts to regain control of time. On September 19, 1861, he wrote in his journal, "A week of fine Autumnal weather. How it has gone, I know not. The noonday warmth and sunshine I have improved for drives with the children, and the afternoon with walks. The rest of the time is looking over old letters and papers, and the routine of everyday life." "By degrees," according to the solicitous Charles Eliot Norton, Longfellow "resumed so far as possible his old habits of life."³⁸

These "old habits," notably, included reading within the domicile. In a journal entry for February 3, 1862, Longfellow wrote, "In the evening, read Dante, Purgatory, with the children," a practice begun because his son Charles, then seventeen, "has taken up this idea from attending Lowell's lectures in college" (James Russell Lowell had inherited Longfellow's position at Harvard).³⁹ This was the same month in which Longfellow recommenced his translation. As biographers acknowledge, Dante's poem must have offered a wellspring of spiritual comfort: but once again, perhaps more significantly, the act of translation functioned as therapy, the stabilizing ritual of "something attempted, something done," relieving lapses into depression that left Longfellow, as he wrote in his journal (January 9, 1863), "ashamed to lead so useless and listless a life." The project began, tentatively at first, on February 20, 1862, with Canto 25 of the *Paradiso*: Longfellow was possibly attracted to lines 136–39, which appear in his published translation as "Ah, how much in my mind was I disturbed, / When I turned round to look on Beatrice, / That her I could not see, although I was / Close at her side, and in the Happy World" (*Works*, 11:126). Fanny herself, admitting that she had suffered in childhood before becoming "emancipated from the Calvinist bonds" by the nurture of Channing, whom she described as "like another Christ to me, cheering, encouraging, warming to life the longing for goodness within me," had believed devoutly in the reality of the spirit world, assuaging

her sorrow at the loss of an infant daughter in 1848 with “the greater joy reserved for me hereafter, when I shall be welcomed to that better land by an angelic maiden, elevated to the timeless love of heaven, with a celestial beauty shining from the face whose childish charm was to me so dear.”⁴⁰ Her husband was less confident; though at Mary’s death he had written in his journal, “She is now, I trust, a Saint in Heaven” (November 29, 1835), in later years he told the novelist William Dean Howells that “he wished he could be sure” about the afterlife, “with that sigh that so often clothed the expression of a misgiving within him.”⁴¹

Whatever Longfellow’s beliefs about eternity, however, his dependence on an appreciative feminine presence at home is indicated by his resort to a surrogate: throughout the spring of 1862, as Longfellow’s journal records, the visits of Fanny’s youngest sister, Harriot Appleton (1841–1923), helped restore an illusion of normalcy, and she proved a willing participant in Dante’s reinstatement into the family circle. “Mr A[ppleton] brings Hattie out for the day. After dinner we read Dante and the other Italians” (March 1); “Hattie came out and we read Dante” (March 11); “Aunt Hattie at dinner. We have no Dante, but billiards instead” (April 17); “Aunt Hattie does not come, which disappoints us all” (April 22); and the following year, on February 12, 1863, “The snow is falling. Aunt Hattie has just gone, and I am lamenting over this neglected journal, and preparing to sit down to a Canto of Dante.” In a letter dated April 30 and preserved at the Massachusetts Historical Society, Longfellow invites Hattie to join the children at a May Day fest: “As I find nothing in Pycroft against it”—James Pycroft (1813–1895) was a reigning authority on education—“I hope it will be agreeable to you. I hope also that you will be able to stay for dinner and Dante, who has quite gone to the wall of late in the press of more urgent affairs.”⁴²

Encouraged at its inception by the sympathetic Hattie, Longfellow’s translation was underway, and as usual his journals track the familiar pleasures of the desk, the staged process of drafting, revising, proofreading, and printing: “All this past week I have been pretty busy upon Dante, quite absorbed” (March 18, 1862); “Another week gone. All given to Dante” (March 25, 1862); “Last Saturday began the *Inferno*. I mean to take a Canto a day, till it is finished” (March 16, 1863); “A rainy day. Finish the translation of the *Inferno*, so the whole work is done, the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* having been finished before. I have written a

Canto a day, thirty-four days in succession, with many anxieties and interruptions. Now I must make some Notes" (April 16, 1863); "I have begun to have Dante set in type, so as to have a clean copy to work upon in making of Notes" (November 27, 1863); "Finished today the revision and copying and re-writing of the 'Purgatorio,' so as to have it all of one piece with the rest; it having been made at different times, long, long ago, and never revised. Now I have the whole before me, and of uniform style and workmanship" (March 17, 1864); "Read to Charles Norton Canto IX Inf. So far onward. Slowly, slowly" (May 6, 1864); "Stay at home and ponder upon Dante. I am frequently tempted to inscribe upon my work the inscription found upon an oar, cast on the coast of Iceland: 'Oft was I weary when I tugged at thee'" (November 13, 1864); "The printing of the Purgatory moves on very slowly. Sometimes I grow impatient. But why hurry?" (March 2, 1865); "The printers get on very slowly with Dante, which puts me quite in despair. The task seems endless, but it will nevertheless come to an end somehow or other" (October 13, 1865).

As is now part of the lore of American Dante studies, the project transformed on October 25, 1865, into the famous Wednesday evening "Dante Club," where Norton, Lowell, and from time to time Oliver Wendell Holmes, Greene, Sumner, Fields, and various others gathered weekly at Longfellow's home to discuss revisions of his translation and then adjourn to a cold supper enhanced by bottles from their host's wine cellar.⁴³ The group's formation also ensured that Longfellow would stick to his task, and its occasions were duly commemorated, one by one, in Longfellow's letters: "To enliven the Winter I have formed a Dante Club, consisting of Lowell, Norton and myself" (to his son Ernest, November 17, 1865; *Letters*, 4:516); "Dante moves on slowly but surely. Next Wednesday we have Canto IX, and perhaps X" (to Greene, January 7, 1866; *Letters*, 5:17); "Dante marches on slowly and with decorum. . . . A little Club meets here every Wednesday evening—Lowell, Norton, and myself—with sometimes an outsider or two. We go over a Canto critically, and then have a supper" (to Sumner, January 17, 1866; *Letters*, 5:23); and, congratulating Norton on the birth of a daughter, "You were reading a Canto of Paradise we little dreamed of, when we missed you at our last meeting of the Dante Club" (June 22, 1866; *Letters*, 5:58). Now a concerted effort, the translation was finally brought to fruition, a tale recorded in Longfellow's dutiful markings: "It is half past twelve o'clock, and I have just finished the Notes to the Purgatorio" (May 1, 1866); "I have

finished the last Note to Paradiso. Eleven A. M.” (November 30, 1866); “The Paradiso published today; and so endeth the Divine Comedy!” (June 26, 1867). If the transcendence of Dante’s poem had consoled Longfellow in his loss, his translation of the *Commedia* restored him to psychological health more obviously by giving him something to do, by redeeming time in the useful labor from which he derived his self-respect: as he wrote his friend Freiligrath on November 18, 1866, “I have done this work, when I could do nothing else, and it has been a great comfort to me” (*Letters*, 5:95). The beautiful sextet of sonnets Longfellow wrote between 1864 and 1866 as epigraphs for his translation begins fittingly with the hallowed image not of artist but of workman: “Oft have I seen at some cathedral door / A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat. . . . So . . . I enter here from day to day, / And leave my burden at this minster gate” (*Works*, 3:140).

V

Longfellow’s translation of the *Divina Commedia* was launched auspiciously, its first appearance coinciding with the sixth-hundredth anniversary of Dante’s birth; a copy of *Inferno*, sumptuously bound in scarlet, was carried to Italy by Sumner in time for the international celebration in 1865. Though the achievement was primarily Longfellow’s, the local literary culture took pride in it as well; on publication of the translation in its entirety his publishers, Ticknor and Fields, hosted an elaborate banquet at the Union Club in Boston to celebrate the event, with a guest list that reads like a bluebook of Boston society.⁴⁴ For all its immediacy in his inner life, poetry for Longfellow—and most vividly the poetry of Dante—operated consistently as a gesture outward, its lines the ligaments of communal solidarity. Both before and after Fanny’s death, as I have suggested, the reading of Dante in Longfellow’s household augmented family bonds; an entry in his journal for January 16, 1874, announces that he had once again read the entire *Commedia*, this time with his daughter Edith. But the uses of the poem as an instrument of rapport extended well beyond the family, and Longfellow’s quotations in friendly discourse were aimed to provoke the delight of recognition, the assurance of a familiar commonality, the tacit compliment of shared initiation—as in the surviving correspondence related to his brief (and, I insist, not ignoble) attraction in 1867 to the young Alice Mary Frere (*Letters*, 5:125–30), to whom

he gave a copy of his translation of Dante as a wedding present, or with his encouraging words to the beleaguered Sumner in the welter of the slavery debates: "Pin this [a quotation from Sir Walter Scott] on your sleeve with the fine lines of Dante, which are still more appropriate to your position" (April 15, 1852; *Letters*, 3:340). The "fine lines" were *Purgatorio* 5.12–15, appearing in Longfellow's translation as "What matters it to thee what here is whispered? / Come after me, and let the people talk; / Stand like a steadfast tower; that never wags / Its summit for the blowing of the winds" (*Works*, 10:30). Longfellow's engagement with Dante had of course been social in its origin, in the friendship with Greene instigated in 1827—"You wound me up on Dante," Longfellow told Greene on April 2, 1863, in yet another clock metaphor, "and I have been running on ever since, striking the Cantos regularly every day" (*Letters*, 4:318). And the translation, obviously, had been generated in the good cheer of a gentlemanly confraternity, its scholarly concentration punctuated by jokes and the antics of Longfellow's dog Trap, its investigations carried over, on the occasions when Greene would ride in from Rhode Island and spend the night, into the casual dishabille of Longfellow's dressing room where, as Longfellow reminded his old friend, "we have so often discussed passages of Dante, while sharing the hot and cold water between us" (September 22, 1865; *Letters*, 4:509). For Norton too, Longfellow's translation was organically connected to the social circumstances of its production: as he told the infant Dante Society in the year after Longfellow died, "the memory of these evenings is renewed by the printed volumes when I take them from the shelves. The verses recall the questions they suggested, the debates to which they led."⁴⁵ It is less well known that the Dante's Club's Wednesday evening meetings were often supplemented by Saturday visits to Norton's home at Shady Hill to assist him with his translation of the *Vita nuova*.⁴⁶

The Dante Club itself, in fact, rose from a social tradition that predated and situated it in the larger context of the European revival. Freed from his duties at Harvard, George Ticknor—a cousin, as it happened, of Greene's—had basked in similar gatherings in Germany in the mid-1830s as Prince John of Saxony (1801–1873) refined his *Übersetzung* with luminaries like the poet Ludwig Tieck, and Ticknor later revived the practice of Dante discussions in his own home. Upon receiving Longfellow's version, Ticknor wrote to him on June 1, 1867, "I did not receive the first volume of your Dante without many thoughts and recollections running

far back into the darkening past. I shall gratefully keep the entire work, with such memories always legible to me between the lines.”⁴⁷ Sending a copy of the Longfellow translation to Prince John, Ticknor recalled, “I listened to Tieck as he read, at each session, a canto of the *Commedia*, just as it had come fresh and warm from your hand, while each of us sat with the original Italian, and suggested any alterations that might occur to either of us. I shall never forget the conscientious kindness with which you listened to the little we could say, what careful discussions followed every doubt, how admirably Tieck read, and how delightful and instructive the whole was.”⁴⁸ The evenings of Ticknor’s nostalgia had also been the delectation of Samuel Gray Ward, who raved about them when he first met Longfellow on the Continent in 1836: “I was full of anecdotes of the home of Hegel and Humboldt, and of the little court of Saxony, where Prince John was completing his translation of Dante, and Baron Lindenau, though Chancellor of Saxony, was still intent upon his astronomical determination of the vagaries of the planet Venus.”⁴⁹ The American sense of cultural parity in the early nineteenth century was to some extent dependent on admission to such salons, which in essence reaffirmed the common matrix placed in jeopardy by a sundering Revolution. The convivial gatherings in Longfellow’s study in the 1860s may thus be placed on a transatlantic continuum. But the ways in which Longfellow disposed the *Commedia* throughout his own social relations had probably most to do with the high regard for poetry that informed his immediate milieu.

As Gregory Clark and S. Michael Hallorann point out, polite society of the early Republic was characterized by adherence to an ideal of “taste,” derived in large part from the philosopher of the Scottish Enlightenment Dugald Stewart (1753–1828) and practically accessible in revered manuals of oratory like Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783); Blair defined taste as “the power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and art” and commended the beneficial effect of “reading the most admired productions of genius.”⁵⁰ Dorothy Broaddus has pointed moreover to the widespread influence of Edward Tyrell Channing (1790–1856), brother of the clergyman and Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard, who “taught a rhetoric of taste, reason, and character, cultivated through study, practice, and initiation.”⁵¹ And if taste consisted, in the words of Clark and Hallorann, in “a kind of knowledge of objects that provided the ground for moral and political judgment,” it was vital to communal health that objects of aesthetic worth

continue to be disseminated, particularly in the backwater of America.⁵² Looking back over the experience of a Harvard education when Charles Eliot Norton died in 1908, his brother-in-law Arthur Sedgwick concluded that the “prescribed curriculum of our day . . . had one great advantage, that it made a solidarity or freemasonry of knowledge among the graduates. . . . All graduates possessed a common fund of learning and training which, as far as it went, represented what was expected to be known by those who called themselves educated men—which had been handed down in the modern world as the summary of necessary human knowledge.”⁵³ Such a mission, indeed a crusade, had impelled the courses on Dante that Norton would eventually carry on at Harvard, and even more his exercised campaign against the encroachments of vulgarity in the last decades of his life. The formation of the Dante Society in 1881—yet another instance, one might say, of the Boston penchant for institutionalization—was largely Norton’s doing, though he recognized that the aegis of Longfellow was crucial.⁵⁴ In private he wrote on February 11, 1881, to Lowell, then ensconced in a diplomatic post in England, “I do not know that much good will come of the Society, beyond the cherishing of the love and honour of the poet in the lives of a few of the better class of students of a generation younger than ourselves. That is enough.”⁵⁵

Norton eventually took charge of the Dante Society and emerged with the publication of his own translation in 1891–92 as the dean of American Dante studies: with the shifting fashions of his time, however, his fabled powers of discrimination were all too easily caricatured as an ossified and disapproving condescension. The word “genteel,” with its original cargo of courtesy and refinement, connoted by the turn of the century sterility and bad faith. In the assessment of Richard Bushman, “Gentility hid what it could not countenance and denied whatever caused discomfort.” Longfellow’s association with gentility would decree, in the ruthless revisionism of modernity, his “long slow slide from canonical shrine to antiquary shop,” and the poet e. e. cummings signed the order of execution in 1922 with his sardonic portrait of Cambridge ladies who “believe in Christ and Longfellow, both dead.”⁵⁶ The critic Van Wyck Brooks (1886–1963), who had in fact read Dante with Norton, envisaged the Dante Club in a retrospective evaluation on the eve of the Second World War as essentially valedictory, a *Götterdämmerung*: “There was something noble and fitting in these gallant celebrations of the great of the past, this chorus of hail and

farewell, in which the generation that was passing acclaimed its teachers and models, its masters and pastors. We who are about to die salute you.”⁵⁷ The “genteel tradition”—the label more or less permanently affixed by the Harvard philosopher George Santayana in 1911 to denigrate, in his words, “an expurgated and barren conception of life”—was indeed about to fade with Longfellow. The last volume of his letters records visits to Boston by Sarah Bernhardt and Oscar Wilde (*Letters*, 6: 661, 666, 668, 694, 704, 705, 766), harbingers of a new dispensation, and in such a context the New England literary culture’s grip on Dante studies—“Boston once excelled in cultural achievement by the simple device of defining culture in terms of those things in which Boston excelled,” as a contemporary snidely put it—uncomfortably suggests a will to consolidate its authority.⁵⁸

Yet if one essays to dismantle the layers of cultural prejudice that separate our time from his, Longfellow’s nearly lifelong involvement with Dante seems very little like a stubborn exclusivism—just as his reliance on a regularly maintained work ethic can hardly be dismissed as the result of pathological anxiety or his devotion to family life mocked as bourgeois sham. He owed his monumentalization to his harmony with the surrounding culture, a culture that defined itself, as did Longfellow, in terms of domestic propriety and earnest work: “This is the Life of a man of letters who was a worker,” his brother Samuel was at pains to insist, and Arthur Sedgwick too stressed the virtual absence of professional slovenliness among the Harvard faculty of Longfellow’s time.⁵⁹ And Longfellow, a man known for his generous tolerance of Greene’s increasing querulousness, his magnanimous acceptance of uncouth international freeloaders—“Who would be kind to him, if I were not?”—and his willingness to show kindness to an awestruck immigrant boy, was hardly interested in hoarding the *Commedia* within the confines of his immediate social circle.⁶⁰ On November 12, 1839, at the outset of his career, he had written, “I envy the position of those writers who lived, when they the authors *made* the taste of the public. Dante, for instance . . .” (*Letters*, 2:185). Longfellow’s wish for the fortunes of his translation was simply, as he expressed it, “at least that it will encourage and facilitate the study of Dante in America and in England” (February 15, 1868; *Letters*, 5:212).

Longfellow’s most moving allusion to Dante’s poem in his last years is undoubtedly “The Cross of Snow” (*Works*, 3:200), the elegiac sonnet composed in 1879 in memory of Fanny and echoing *Paradiso* 15.148, “e

venni dal martiro a questa pace”: “and soul more white / Never through martyrdom of fire was led / To its repose.”⁶¹ Unpublished during his lifetime, the poem is inviolably private, testifying to the continuing importance of the *Commedia* for Longfellow’s personal memory. Yet the quotation was not too sacred to be applied by him again on a public occasion, the assassination of President Garfield in 1881 (*Works*, 3:283–84); as Richard Marius reminds us, poetry in nineteenth-century America remained essentially “a public act, appended routinely to oratory,” the avenue to a parallel but transcendent plane of meaning that shed radiance on the mundane.⁶² In a culture still so fraught with sectarian controversy that Longfellow’s own daughter feared to tell him of her membership in an Episcopal church—“Life is the thing, and not the creed,” her father reassured her (April 4, 1879; *Letters*, 6:468)—poetry indeed surpassed scripture as a device to consecrate an occasion and unite the emotions of an audience. In “Morturi Salutamus” (*Works*, 3:187–96), composed in 1875 for public reading at the fifty-year reunion of his class at Bowdoin, Longfellow accordingly featured the figure of Brunetto Latini (*Inf.* 15) as model for “the teachers who in earlier days / Led our bewildered feet through learning’s maze.” As with his affectionate association between Fanny and Francesca, the allusion reminds us that, like Dante’s elaborate allegory, the complication of his characters and the irony of their self-deceptions remained largely beyond Longfellow’s ken; to him the sinners of *Inferno* only radiated pageantry and tragic grandeur. But Longfellow also made use of the occasion to reiterate the resolution to productivity that had no doubt conveyed him to his uncontested status: “Morituri Salutamus” culminates in lines inspired by Ulysses in *Inferno* 26.112–20, “The night hath not yet come; we are not quite / Cut off from labor by the failing light; / Something remains for us to do or dare; / Even the oldest tree some fruit may bear.”

Even in his latter decades, apparently, the “daily call to labor” continued to toll for Longfellow, who had after all described himself in the poem “Weariness” as “I, who so much with book and pen / Have toiled among my fellow men” (1863; *Works*, 3:72); his summer home at Nahant, for all its serenity, reminded him, as he complained in his journal in 1870, that “there is nothing more disagreeable than long-continued and enforced idleness,” and in the last year of his life he was attempting to revive the old Wednesday night Dante Club in support of a proposed revision of his translation.⁶³ His children knew him well enough to erect after his death

a sundial engraved with words they no doubt had by heart: “Pensa che questo dì mai non raggiorna.” The old habits of regularity and measured pace were similarly both too comforting and too deeply entrenched to be discarded: when the Boston writer Thomas Bailey Aldrich sent him a new collection of poems, Longfellow replied, “I keep the book on my desk, and read in it a poem a day. That is my way of enjoying poetry” (October 27, 1880; *Letters*, 6:645). Only a few weeks before his death, he fell back on his favorite quotation from *Purgatorio* to apologize for a belated response to a birthday letter, but he was still enough absorbed in the line to polish his diction: “I . . . should have thanked you sooner but for illness, which as Dante says of Haste ‘mars all grace of action’” (March 9, 1882; *Letters*, 6:777). It is fair to protest that the principle of “grace of action” came too easily to Longfellow: born to privilege and financially secure, he had early found his way to a *locus amoenus* where, as he had imagined in his youth, “life would wear smoothly away” (January 14, 1823; *Letters*, 1:36). But the ordered life to which he bound himself, the consistent progress of “something attempted, something done,” shored up in its wake a lasting respect for literary production in America—and, not least, laid foundations for the continuing study to this day of the “mediaeval miracle of song” (*Works*, 3:141) that Longfellow, advancing with *onestade* on a pilgrimage of his own choosing, had made into his book of hours and his daily bread.

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NOTES

This essay was composed in constant memory of my father, Harold Verduin (1916–2008). The poems of Longfellow memorized in a country schoolhouse served him well over a long life of integrity and hard work, and he was still reciting them to his children in the days before his death.

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Henry Channing, and James Freeman Clarke, eds., *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (Boston, 1852), 1:240; Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, ed. William H. Gilman and J. E. Parsons., vol. 8 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 97; *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, ed. Robert Hudspeth, vol. 4 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 158; Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 665. Quotations from the journals of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and are cited in the text by date: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (188–214), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

2. Annie Fields, *Authors and Friends* (Boston, 1896), 59.

3. K. P. Van Anglen, "Before Longfellow: Dante and the Polarization of New England," *Dante Studies* 119 (2001): 155–86; Emilio Goggio, "Longfellow and Dante," *Thirty-ninth, Fortieth, and Forty-first Annual Reports of the Dante Society of America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1924), 25. A comprehensive list of nineteenth-century publications on Dante may be found in Theodore W. Koch, *Dante in America: A Historical and Bibliographical Study* (Boston, 1896), reprinted in the *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Dante Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1896) and again in *Dante Studies* 118 (2000), 7–56.
4. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, "Longfellow and Dante," 5, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana Papers, LONG 17714, box 129, folder 6, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site; *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner*, ed. Edward L. Pierce (Boston, 1877), 2:118–19. I am grateful to Anita Israel, archives specialist at the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, for her generous assistance with this project.
5. All references to the poems of Longfellow cited in the text are to *The Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, ed. Samuel Longfellow, 14 vols. (Boston, 1886).
6. On the "Byronic Dante," see Steve Ellis, *Dante and English Poetry: Shelley to T. S. Eliot* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 36–65.
7. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to Longfellow's correspondence cited in the text are to *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, ed. Andrew Hilen, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966–82).
8. Georges Poulet, "Time and American Writers," appendix to his *Studies in Human Time*, trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 338.
9. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribner's, 1958), 157; Richard Baxter, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest; or, A Treatise on the Blessed State of the Saints in Their Enjoyment of God in Heaven*, abridged Benjamin Fawcett (Philadelphia, 1828), 190; John Cotton, *The Way of Life*, quoted in Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (1952; repr., Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 41; Samuel Danforth, "The Cry of Sodom Enquired Into: Upon Occasion of the Arraignment and Condemnation of Benjamin Goad, for his Prodigious Villainy" (Cambridge, Mass., 1674), 19.
10. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, vol. 1 of the Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. William Charvat et al. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962), 10.
11. *The Works of William E. Channing, D. D.* (Boston, 1892), 25.
12. William Bennett, *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 397.
13. Quoted in Jill Anderson, "'Be Up and Doing': Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Poetic Labor," *Journal of American Studies* 37, no. 1 (2003): 1.
14. [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow], rev. of *The Defence of Poetry* by Sir Philip Sidney, *North American Review* January 1832, 76.
15. Matthew Gartner, "Becoming Longfellow: Work, Manhood, and Poetry," *American Literature* 72, no. 1 (2000): 61.
16. Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 17; Seamus Heaney, "The Making of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats," in his *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968–1978* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), 65.
17. Lawrence Buell, Introduction to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Selected Poems*, ed. Lawrence Buell (New York: Penguin, 1988), xii.
18. Ernest Longfellow, *Random Memories* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), 13; Charles Eliot Norton, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: A Sketch of His Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), 19.
19. Quoted in Koch, *Dante in America*, 38.
20. Samuel Longfellow, ed., *The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 3 vols. (vols. 12–14 of *The Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*), 1:286; see also Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life*, 133.
21. Samuel Gray Ward, "Days with Longfellow," *North American Review*, May 1882, 459.
22. See Dana, "Longfellow and Dante," 12.
23. *The Diary of Clara Crouminshield: A European Tour with Longfellow 1835–36*, ed. Andrew Hilen (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1956), 114. See also *Letters*, 3:374.

24. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Divina Commedia" (unpublished lecture), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (106), 2.
25. Christoph Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 171–73, 258; *Public Poet, Private Man: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at 200*, *Harvard Library Bulletin* 17, nos. 3–4 (2006), 154–58.
26. See also Kirsten Silva Gruesz, "Feeling the Fireside: Longfellow, Lynch, and the Topography of Poetic Power," *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*, ed. Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 43–63.
27. Anna Barker Ward, *Diary*, bMS Am 1465 (1341), Houghton Library, Harvard University.
28. Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Sarracino Zboray, *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experiences among Antebellum New Englanders* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), xviii.
29. Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage-Random, 1993), 281; Samuel Gray Ward, "Days with Longfellow," 458.
30. Louise Hall Tharp, *The Appletons of Beacon Hill* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 121–22.
31. *Ibid.*, 176; for Longfellow's opinion of Wilde, see *Letters* 2:220, 285.
32. Journal to Europe 1836, Frances Elizabeth Appleton Longfellow Papers, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, LONG 21591. All documents from this collection are quoted courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.
33. S. Eugene Scaglia, "Figures of the Risorgimento in America: Ignazio Batolo, Alias Pietro Bachi, and Pietro D'Allessandro," *Italica* 42, no. 4 (1965): 311–57. For Longfellow's sympathetic response when Bachi was dismissed from Harvard, see his journal entries for September 1846.
34. Journal for 1840, Frances Elizabeth Appleton Longfellow Papers, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, LONG 21570.
35. Letters from Frances Elizabeth Appleton Longfellow, box 2, folder 1, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site. For a published collection of Fanny Longfellow's writings, see Edward Wagenknecht, *Mrs. Longfellow: Selected Letters and Journals* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956).
36. Diary for 1844, Frances Elizabeth Appleton Longfellow Papers, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, LONG 21575; Tom Appleton is quoted in Tharp, *The Appletons of Beacon Hill*, 261.
37. "Chronicle of Craigie Castle 1848–49," Frances Elizabeth Appleton Longfellow Papers, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, LONG 20257.
38. Norton, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 36.
39. This journal entry is quoted from Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 3:2.
40. Diary 1833–1852, Frances Elizabeth Appleton Longfellow Papers, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, LONG 21598.
41. William Dean Howells, "The White Mr. Longfellow," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, August 1896, 340.
42. Letter to Harriot Appleton, Harriot Appleton Curtis Papers, MS N 2251, quoted by permission of the Massachusetts Historical Society. I am grateful to my colleague Richard Smith for identifying Pycroft.
43. Annie Fields's diary contains a vignette: "Dante Club at L.'s again in the evening. They were discussing the word 'striker' when I entered. Said L. what do you think Fields, 'that I should not use it.' Lowell & Norton were for the words the Baron (Mackay, the only stranger last night) . . . sided with Longfellow & J[ames T. Fields]. They are revising the whole work with the minutest care. Mr. Lowell's accuracy is astonishing as it is valuable for the work. Mr Norton's remarks here also [bear] their weight though he knows nothing of the construction of verse and has no ear for it; he is a purist J says and a classicist both of which qualities have their value in this work. No one can see what corrections L. makes. He sits apart or stands at his desk pencil in hand and accepts the remarks or not as he thinks best." Quoted in Susan K. Harris, *The Cultural Work of the Late Nineteenth-Century Hostess: Annie Adams Fields and Mary Gladstone Drew* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2002), 41.

44. Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 3:99. For a survey of the American publication of Dante from 1820–1920, see my “Dante in America: The First Hundred Years,” in *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America*, ed. Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 16–51.
45. “Remarks of Mr. Norton at the Annual Meeting of the Dante Society, May 16, 1882,” *First Annual Report of the Dante Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1882), 23.
46. *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, ed. Sara Norton and M. A. DeWolfe Howe (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1913), 1:294.
47. *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor* (Boston, 1877), 2:480; J. Chesley Mathews, “The Interest in Dante Shown by Nineteenth-Century American Men of Letters,” *Dante Alighieri: Three Lectures* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1965), 4; Ticknor quoted in Samuel Longfellow, *The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 3:94.
48. *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, 2:479. The second part of Prince John’s translation was published between 1839 and 1840.
49. Samuel Gray Ward, “Days with Longfellow,” 455.
50. Gregory Clark and S. Michael Hallorann, *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Transformations and the Practice of Rhetoric* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, in *The Rhetoric of Blair, Campbell, and Whately*, ed. James J. Golden and Edward P. J. Corbett (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 36–37.
51. Dorothy C. Broaddus, *Genteel Rhetoric: Writing High Culture in Nineteenth-Century Boston*, Studies in Rhetoric/Communication (Columbus: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), ix.
52. Clark and Hallorann, *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, 16.
53. Arthur Sedgwick, appendix to *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 2:431.
54. *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 2:101–102; for a history of the Dante Society, see Anthony De Vito, “The First Hundred Years of the Dante Society,” *Dante Studies* C (1982), 99–132. On institutionalization in Boston, see Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy: Harvard and the Boston Upper Class, 1800–1870* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), 12.
55. *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 2:117.
56. Bushman, 99; Eric L. Haralson, “Mars in Petticoats: Longfellow and Sentimental Masculinity,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 51, no. 3 (1996): 328; e. e. cummings, *100 Selected Poems* (New York: Grove, 1959), 8.
57. Van Wyck Brooks, *New England: Indian Summer 1865–1915* (New York: Dutton, 1940), 27–28.
58. *The Genteel Tradition: Nine Essays by George Santayana*, ed. Douglas L. Wilson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 78; Richard Shryock, quoted in William Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America 1790–1850* (1959; repr., Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 21–21.
59. Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 1:viii; Sedgwick in *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 2:431.
60. Howells, “The White Mr. Longfellow,” 335; Ernest Longfellow, 24–25; Edward Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok: The Autobiography of a Dutch Boy Fifty Years After* (New York: Scribner’s, 1923), 41–47.
61. On this poem, see James M. Cox, “Longfellow and His Cross of Snow,” *PMLA* 85 (1960): 97–100.
62. Richard Marius, Introduction, *The Columbia Book of Civil War Poetry*, ed. Richard Marius (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xiii.
63. Samuel Longfellow, *The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 3:152; “Remarks of Mr. Norton,” 25.

Reading for Our Delight

CHRISTOPH IRMSCHER

In Canto 5 of *Inferno*, the pilgrim Dante, accompanied by Virgil and no longer a novice, has passed into the second circle of Hell. Here rules the snarling Minos, relentless “discriminator of transgressions,” a perverse father confessor meting out punishments to the desperate souls that are sent to him, indicating by the number of coils of his tails how many further circles in hell a condemned soul must descend. “Oh thou, that to this dolorous hostelry comest,” he shouts, the formality of his language strangely out of sync with what he is actually doing, to Dante, “Look . . . in whom thou trustest.”¹ I am quoting here, as I will throughout this essay, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s translation of the *Commedia*, which he completed in 1867.

Dante has trouble seeing. All around him are the ungodly noises made by the tormented souls. The second circle of hell is “mute of all light,” as Longfellow literally translates Dante’s “d’ogne luce muto” (*Inf.* 5.28), a phrase I much prefer to Ciardi’s “stripped bare of every light” (Pinsky, Hollander, and, most recently, Kirkpatrick have all adopted, with only slight modifications, Longfellow’s formulation).² Longfellow’s version is spot-on here since it emphasizes that the loss of light means more than the inability to see. It also throws into relief the sheer animality of the environment in which Dante finds himself, listening to the shouts and screams of the condemned, so harsh that they sound like the lamentations of cranes (*Inf.* 5.46). This is the second avian analogy in the space of a dozen or so lines; earlier, souls of the sinners, tossed around by the blasting winds, had looked like flocks of starlings (“stornei”) to Dante (*Inf.* 5.40).

Here, in this dark world where sheer noise would seem to forestall all attempts at conversation, Dante encounters Semiramis, Dido, Cleopatra,

Helen, Achilles, Paris, and Tristan—carnal sinners all—swirling by in a desperate mockery of a dance. For Dante's benefit, Virgil goes on to name more than a thousand shades, each of them condemned to everlasting suffering. Among them, however, are two lovers who seem quite different. They are turtle-doves ("colombe") rather than cranes, and they are, as Dante says in a memorably beautiful phrase, "light . . . upon the wind" (al vento esser leggieri). Dante cries out to them, and miraculously the winds cease, so that one of them (only later do we learn that it is Francesca da Rimini) is able to respond. She tells Dante how she was married to the lord of Rimini, Giovanni "Gianciotto" Malatesta but fell in love with his younger (and better-looking) brother Paolo. "Love, that on the gentle heart doth swiftly seize" took hold of her as well as of Paolo. They were caught in flagrante by her husband, who stabbed them both to death. In Hell, she is forever united with Paolo, in a never-ending cycle of love ("it doth not yet desert me," she says) and suffering.

Dante bows his face. Moved to tears, he wants to hear more. How exactly did you find out you were in love with each other? he asks Francesca. Or, more precisely, how did Love (*Amor*) allow you to find out that you desired each other? A curiously prurient question until we remember Dante's own helpless obsession, in *Vita nuova*, with the workings of *Amor*, an unpredictable being, almost human in proportions if not in substance, that made him spend his life in "amorosa erranza."³ Francesca claims that she does not want to remember those happier times now: "There is no greater sorrow / Than to be mindful of the happy time / In misery" (Nessun maggior dolore / che ricordarsi del tempo felice / ne la miseria [*Inf.* 5.121–23]). But then she answers Dante anyway: it was a book that did it, the story of Lancelot, who fell in love with Guinevere, King Arthur's wife. The impact of Lancelot and Guinevere's story, which Paolo and Francesca read together, was so powerful that, when they reached the narrative climax—namely, the moment when Lancelot and Guinevere kiss—the words on the page before them caused them to reenact what they had been reading about. This is the scene Auguste Rodin would invoke so powerfully in the sculpture he called *Le Baiser* (1888/89), where we see the book sliding from Paolo's left hand, growing limp under the onslaught of Francesca's embrace. Here is Longfellow's translation of the relevant passage from *Inferno* 5 (127–36):

One day we reading were for our delight
Of Launcelot, how Love did him enthrall,
Alone we were and without any fear,
Full many a time our eyes together drew
That reading, and drove the color from our faces;
But one point only was not that o'ercame us,
When as we read of the much longed-for smile
Being by such a noble lover kissed,
This one, who ne'er from me shall be divided,
Kissed me upon the mouth all palpitating.

(Longfellow, *Works* 9: 47)

After this, they didn't read any further, adds Francesca, leaving it to Dante's feverish brain to imagine what came next. Dante's reaction is as powerful as Francesca's story: he faints, and in this wind-swept world where there is no light and sound isn't what it is supposed to be, Dante the author takes care to tell us how exactly Dante the character passed out—he fell “even as a dead body falls” (*Inf.* 5.142).

This is an intricate scene, and I cannot go into the list of possible sources and the interpretative nuances generations of critics have teased out of it. I myself continue to be amazed by how Dante manages to complicate his narrative without seeming at all contrived: telling the story of how the character Dante was told a story by another character, Francesca, he inserts yet another story into it—in the form of the book in which Francesca and Paolo immerse themselves. What interests me here is that, despite the generally acknowledged aesthetic merits of the scene, Francesca herself hasn't fared so well with the critics, at least the modern ones. What Dante has given us in Francesca, opined Charles Williams in 1944, is the embodied excuse for lust, one that is so transparent, though, that readers will learn from it: “The sweet prolonged laziness of love is the first surrender of the soul to hell.”⁴ Yes, Francesca is charming, conceded Dorothy Sayers a few years later, “all the good is there,” all the grateful eagerness to please. But we also get all the evil from her: “the easy yielding, the inability to say No, the intense self-pity.”⁵ The fact that Dante himself is so affected by her speech that he passes out isn't really a good sign then. “If we see,” writes Robert Hollander in the notes to his translation of *Inferno*, “that Francesca's aim is precisely to gain Dante's pity, and that she is successful in doing so, we perhaps ought to question his offering of it. Sympathy for the damned, in the *Inferno*, is nearly always and nearly

certainly the sign of wavering moral disposition.”⁶ And, sure enough, Dante himself, later in the *Commedia*, gives us a clue as to how the scene ought to be read. When Francesca seeks to render her sin plausible to Dante, she says: “ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse” (*Inf.* 5.132). In Longfellow’s translation, “But one point only was it that o’ercame us,” a reference to Lancelot’s and Queen Guinevere’s kiss. Dante the theologian returns to precisely that phrase later, in *Paradiso* 30.11, where he has Dante the character, now literally enlightened, refer to God as the “the point that vanquished me” (*punto che mi vinse*). If vanquished one must be, then by God.⁷

Such overwhelmingly negative readings of Francesca are a fairly recent development, though. As late as 1960, Irma Brandeis felt compelled to point out the “context-blindness” that had allowed so many Dante critics (all of them male, apparently), to “separate Francesca from the scene Dante has so carefully wrought around her” and to forget “that she is not a woman” but an impenitent soul that was placed in Hell for a reason. Brandeis’s targets were especially those benighted romantic readers of Dante, Longfellow among them, who just didn’t understand why she was there.⁸

It is true (and perhaps ironic) that the straight-laced Victorians had fewer problems with the lustful lady than most of their successors. “Even your doom affords kisses and tears,” crooned the Boston dentist Thomas William Parsons, the first American to take a stab at Dante’s *Inferno*, in melting lines addressed to Francesca.⁹ Some writers—by an interesting sleight of hand—went so far as to place the blame not on the lovers themselves but on their reading material. In *Francesca da Rimini* (1855), a play by the Philadelphia playwright George Henry Boker (1823–1890) that proved to be reasonably popular, the jester Pepe happens to come across Paolo and Francesca in the garden. Hiding in the bushes, he witnesses Paolo kiss Francesca. Recreating the scene for the duke (named Lanciotto here, a fusion of Lancelot and Gianciotto), Francesca’s husband and Paolo’s brother, Pepe gives pride of place to the book in which they were so engrossed. They stuck, said Pepe,

... too closely to the text,
Got too much wrapped up in the poesy,
And played Sir Lancelot’s actions, out and out,
On Queen Francesca. Nor in royal parts

Was she so backward. When he struck the line—
“She smiled; he kissed her full upon the mouth;”
Your lady smiled, and, by the saints above,
Paolo carried out the sentiment!
Can I not move you?
LANCIOTTO. With such trash as this?

Lanciotto (“Gianciotto”), listening to Pepe’s reenactment of Paolo and Francesca’s reenactment of Lancelot and Guinevere’s kiss, is unimpressed. To him, the story is “trash.” It is not before Pepe draws a dagger and claims, falsely, that Paolo has sent him to kill Lanciotto, that the truth of his wife’s infidelity sinks in. In Boker’s play, Paolo and Francesca’s love dooms all the participants. In the play’s last scene, Lanciotto collapses on top of the body of the brother he has just killed. As Paolo had admitted earlier in the play, “My love blurs my thoughts / Of duty, and confuses my ideas / Of right and wrong.”¹⁰

Nevertheless, the fact remains that what triggered the crisis was a book, the *wrong* book. Francesca lands in Hell because of her questionable habits as a reader or, more precisely, the fact that she is a *bad* reader, a worthy ancestor of Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (incidentally, one of Longfellow’s favorite literary characters).¹¹ Her repeated invocations of *Amor* as the culprit place her squarely in the tradition of courtly love poetry (what Pepe calls “poesy”). Apart from *Lancelot du Lac*, she quotes Cavalcanti, Guido Guinizelli, and Dante’s own earlier poetry in *Vita nuova*—specifically the sonnet about his love for Beatrice that begins with an unsubtle nod to Guinizelli (“il saggio”) and is, as Peter Levine has recently suggested, easily one of Dante’s worst: “Amore e ’l cor gentil sono una cosa / sì come il saggio in suo dittare pone.”¹²

And Francesca is not even a terribly attentive reader. Maybe she is even a liar. In *Lancelot du Lac*, Queen Guinevere initiates the kiss, not Lancelot, a detail Francesca conveniently leaves out.¹³ Wrapped up in her stories, spouting emotions that came to her second- or even third-hand, Francesca seems, to Levine, “like a modern person who speaks entirely in lines borrowed from top-forty songs.” And the worst part of it is that Dante seems to like her songs. Moved by someone else’s bad taste in literature, he passes out. What he must learn as the *Commedia* progresses is that Francesca’s love story—filled as it is with references to “gentle hearts,” “sweet sighing,” and “deep passion”—just doesn’t cut it. The whole point of Dante’s poem is, of course, that there is only one story—namely

that of God's Divine Love—that supersedes all others. From Levine's point of view, Longfellow and his hopelessly Francesca-smitten fellow poets such as John Keats or Leigh Hunt were simply too unwilling to accept Dante's theological argument, based as it is on the superiority of theory (understood in its original sense, as the viewing of God) over the superficial delights of poetic narrative.¹⁴

Longfellow couldn't have agreed less. As the notes accompanying his translation show, he knew very well that Francesca had "stolen" some of her lines. But he wouldn't have cared.¹⁵ After all, that's what he was doing, regularly when he wrote his own poems (which is why Edgar Allan Poe once called him, ungenerously, "the GREAT MOGUL of the Imitators").¹⁶ For Longfellow, Francesca's speech was at a center of inter-textual relations that spanned centuries. We still have his "working" edition of the *Commedia*, an "interleaved copy" of the poem "the blank

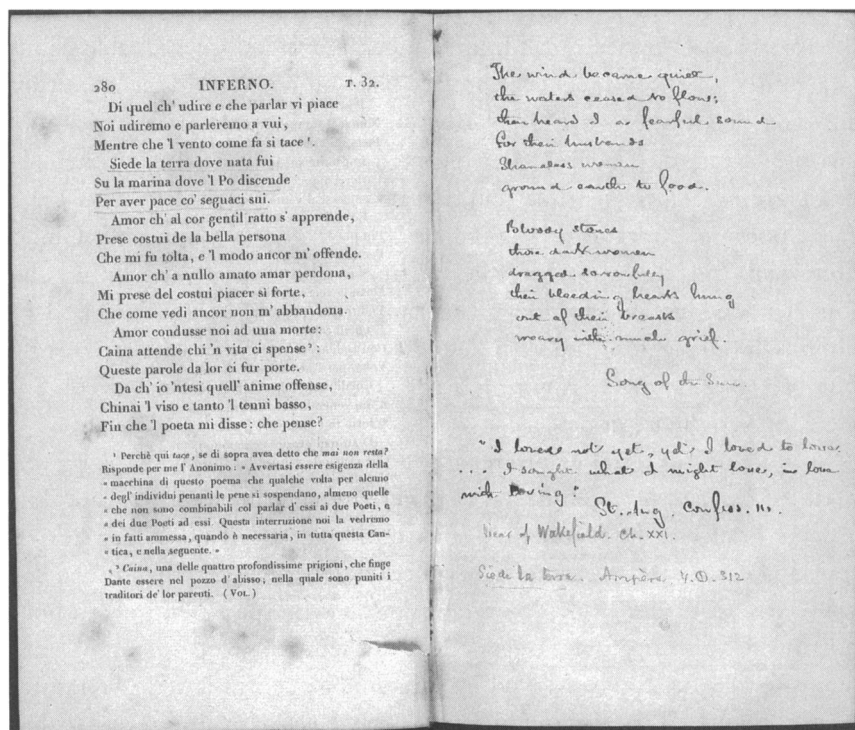


Figure 1: Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 5, p. 280, from vol. 2 of Longfellow's personal, rebound edition of the *Divina Commedia* (Paris: Lefevre, 1823), Houghton Library, Harvard University, *AC85.L8605.Zy823d.

pages of which he gradually filled with notes and with translations of noteworthy passages.”¹⁷ Longfellow had taken Antonio Buttura’s two-volume edition from 1823, broken it up, and inserted notepaper between the pages. Then he had the work rebound in four volumes for easy access (fig. 1). The passage shown in figure 1 is the beginning of Francesca’s speech. The notes on the facing page show references to the “Song of the Sun” (or “Solarlióð”) from the *Edda*, Augustine’s *Confessions*, a chapter from Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and Jean-Jacques Ampère’s *Viaggio Dantesco*. Longfellow could not read or write a line of poetry without thinking of a plethora of other lines that he had read or had heard mentioned elsewhere. Literary originality, still fetishized by us today, was not his main concern. “We all die copies, though born originals,” Longfellow said in one of his lectures on Dante, adapting a sentence from Edward Young’s *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759).¹⁸

Longfellow’s fascination with Francesca—interestingly, a female literary character—tells us a lot about what kind of a poet Longfellow was. It also tells us quite a bit about the forgotten history of literary cosmopolitanism in nineteenth-century America. (Matthew Pearl, in his 2003 novel *The Dante Club*, has reminded us forcefully what a radical thing it was to translate Dante in xenophobic mid-nineteenth-century Cambridge). In passing, I would also like to suggest that it was no accident that—while Herman Melville was condemning all imitation of “foreign models” because it wouldn’t help prepare Americans for their imminent political “supremacy” among the nations¹⁹—Longfellow spent his days reading, translating, and in his lectures patiently explaining Goethe, Dante, and Molière, without getting much support from Harvard’s administration. Nobody “cared a pin” when Longfellow wanted to get his colleagues to sign a petition for cheap overseas postage, and Harvard’s president James Walker proudly went on record as saying that he had only received one letter from Europe in his life and hoped never to get another one.²⁰

When Matthew Pearl’s new edition of *Inferno* was published in 2003, critics were quick to remind us that Longfellow had deliberately neglected the theological, allegorical level of the *Commedia*.²¹ But Longfellow was enough of a scholar to know what he was doing; in fact, he was completely unabashed about his desire to read the *Commedia* as, above all, a

poem. Indeed, as early as 1838 he told his Harvard undergraduates, "Dante was . . . the scribe of Love. All his female portraits are drawn with exquisite delicacy. They are sweet creations of a most refined imagination. . . . I do not remember in all his writings a single sarcasm upon woman. He pardoned frailty even. . . . He knew, that under much degradation there still may beat a human heart, more worthy of pity, than of scorn."²² Longfellow's creative misreading of Dante (which is so markedly different from Robert Hollander's warning not to pity a sinner) suggests the depth of his emotional investment in Francesca.

First and foremost, it would have been important to him that Francesca had a way with words. She speaks fluent Tuscan in Dante's poem but she tears up when remembering the French book she shared with her lover. This must have intrigued Longfellow, proficient speaker of eight or nine languages and reader of many more. His love affair with the polyglot Francesca began when he visited Rimini, where Francesca lived as the wife of Gianciotto Malatesta, in December 1828 (fig. 2). In his journal he paid tribute to Francesca, in both French and Italian: "C'est Francesca qui parle," wrote Longfellow, "et puis elle continue le récit, dans les paroles du poete [*sic*] 'come colui che piange e dice' [*Inf.* 5.126]."²³ Longfellow was so taken by the story that he added his own, fanciful drawing of the fatal confrontation between Paolo and Gianciotto, who is wielding a dagger.²⁴

Longfellow's interest in Dante had been awakened. A week later, in a letter to George Washington Greene from Rhode Island, whom he had met a year earlier, he somewhat melodramatically quoted Francesca's lines about the great sorrow caused by remembrance of happier times in the middle of misfortune when he wanted to express how much he missed him: "You will call to mind those expressive words of Dante in the melancholy little story of Francesca da Rimini. . . ."²⁵ Longfellow was showing off here, of course, but the Dante quote helped reaffirm their relationship. Longfellow, the future Bowdoin professor, and Greene, a Bowdoin dropout who was four years younger than Longfellow and whose main claim to distinction was and remained the fact that he was the grandson of Revolutionary War general Nathanael Greene, came to share a deep love for the *Commedia*. Their joint infatuation with all things Italian must have helped Longfellow overlook Greene's intellectual mediocrity and tolerate the latter's emotional as well as, in later years, direct financial dependence on him.²⁶

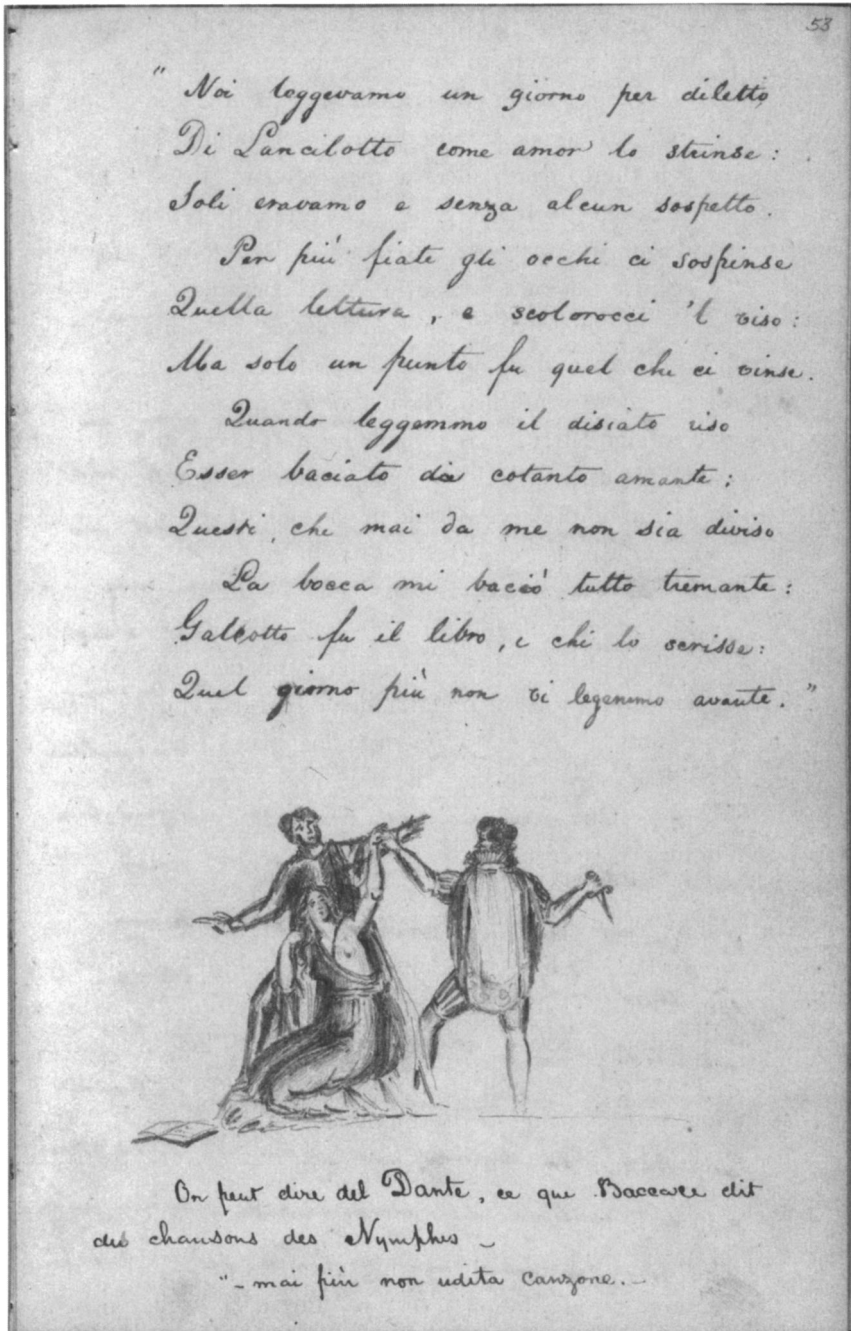


Figure 2: Longfellow, drawing of Paolo and Francesca, from journal of 1828–29, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (178), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

During the following years Francesca remained very much on Longfellow's mind. After his return from Europe, he began his duties as a professor of foreign languages at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. He produced his own textbooks, among them an Italian grammar written in French, and it is there that Francesca appears again (fig. 3). The very existence of the book—an Italian grammar written in French, for use by American college students—is remarkable. Bowdoin's curriculum required the completion of a course in French before undertaking the study of Italian. Longfellow's *Grammaire Italienne*, by combining both these languages in one book, is an original attempt to help students master this requirement more smoothly. Having performed the initial leap of accepting one foreign language as a viable means of communication, his American students—at least “ceux qui possèdent la Langue Française,” as Longfellow put it in his preface—would be, or ought to be, more inclined to perform another leap and embrace the Italian language too.

Longfellow's little grammar book was shaped by the need to make the Italian language come alive—not through dry and nonsensical grammar exercises but with the help of memorable literary characters whose desires spoke directly to impressionable undergraduate readers. Thus Francesca is asked to demonstrate to Bowdoin undergraduates how the comparative (“degrés de comparaison”) works in the Italian language (“Nessún MAGGIÓR dolor [*sic*] / Che ricordarsi”) or, a few sections later, how to use Italian indefinite pronouns properly. Longfellow reprints a sizable chunk of Francesca's speech—“un des plus beaux morceaux de *La Divina Commedia* du Dante,” he tells his undergraduates—carefully capitalizing the pronouns so that they are easier to identify. If we bear in mind that Longfellow had mixed French and Italian in his travel diaries before he started teaching at Bowdoin, we may safely assume that sheer linguistic exuberance, and not dry pedagogical utilitarianism, would have been a motivating factor too in the writing of this bilingual textbook—as would have been the joyful knowledge that all the languages of the world participate in a common project.

Longfellow began to study the *Commedia* systematically in 1838 for a series of Harvard lectures in the late spring. By that time, another “Francesca” had entered his life, Frances “Fanny” Elizabeth Appleton, whom he had met in Germany in 1836 and courted unsuccessfully since. She added autobiographical urgency to Longfellow's interest in Dante's poem

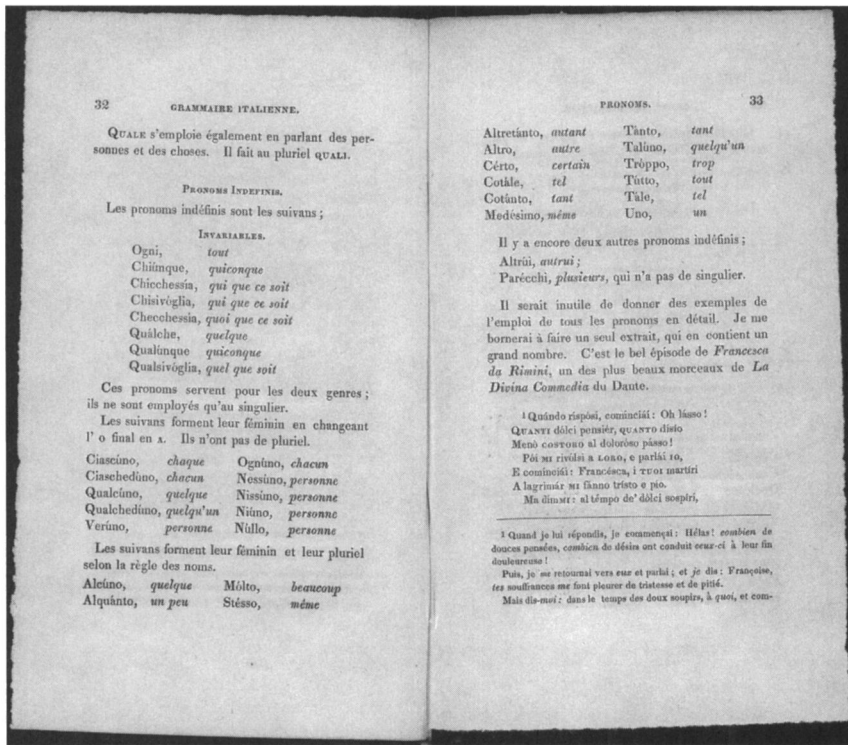


Figure 3: Longfellow, *Syllabus de la grammaire Italienne* (Boston, 1838), Houghton Library, Harvard University, *2100G479.

as he was passing the hot days “upon a sofa”²⁷ reading *Inferno*. When Fanny finally relented (they were married on July 13, 1843), Longfellow’s long-dormant sensuality reawakened. In journal entries we find him extolling his wife’s beauty or enjoying the “delicious” time he gets to spend alone with her when he steals into her chamber, “like a law student and a grisette in their mansarde.”²⁸ When he got ready to lecture to his Harvard students about Francesca and *Inferno* 5, Fanny allowed him to take one of her pictures to class, and a rather revealing one it was: Luigi Calamatta’s engraving of *Françoise de Rimini*, made after a painting by the Dutch artist Ary Scheffer (1795–1858) (fig. 4).

It is almost too tempting to visualize that early, unusual moment of “show and tell” in Harvard Hall—the Harvard postadolescent undergraduates staring at Francesca’s unclothed figure, mentally tracing the seductive outlines of her body. Scheffer, who almost compulsively repainted

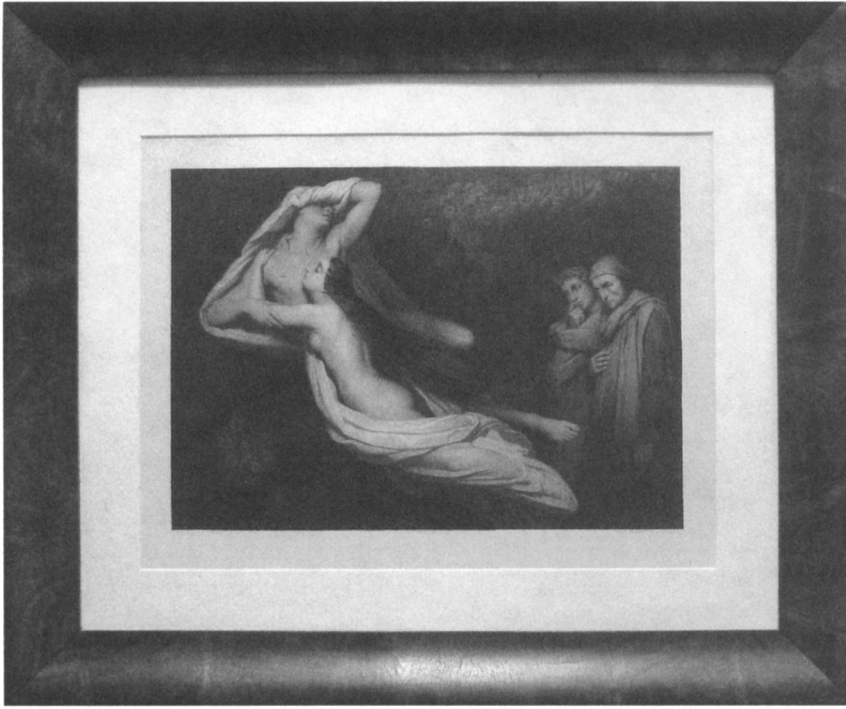


Figure 4: Engraving by Luigi Calamatta after Ary Scheffer, *Françoise de Rimini*, Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, Cambridge, Massachusetts, LONG 4674.

that same image throughout his life,²⁹ wanted viewers to see how terrible Francesca’s sin really was. But, inadvertently or not, he ended up encouraging the very kind of desire in the viewer that he sought to discourage. Dante and Virgil, looking grave, lurk on the right, the student next to his professor. They seem slightly comical here—graceless bystanders of a spectacle that transcends their understanding. Professor Longfellow was a dedicated teacher—but not so dedicated that he wasn’t able to make fun of himself. At Harvard, he once wrote in his journal, he was “working in the crypts of life.”³⁰ On that memorable day in Longfellow’s classroom, Calamatta-Schaffer’s lusty engraving served as a rather unconventional kind of teaching aid: a welcome illustration of Dante’s intricate text, no doubt, but also a sly parody of the awkward situation that emerges when the drama of sensual love, barely legitimized by the acknowledged literary masterwork that contains it, enters the undergraduate classroom.³¹

After Fanny Longfellow's dreadful death by fire in 1861, Longfellow resolved to complete the translation of the *Commedia* he had begun. In Dante's quest for his lost Beatrice he must have seen—as biographers have told us—a powerful and poignant model for his own desire to become reunited with Fanny. But Longfellow's journals show that Francesca da Rimini was also very much on his mind during these terrible years. For years after Fanny, or "Frances," Appleton's death, he would commemorate May 10, 1843, Fanny's and his "secret anniversary" (the day she had finally accepted his proposal), by copying Francesca's outcry about being forced to remember happiness in the times of misery into his journal: "Nessun maggior dolore / che ricordarsi del tempo felice / ne la miseria" (*Inf.* 5.121–23) (see, for example, May 10, 1864, May 10, 1867).

Not surprisingly, then, translating Francesca's canto was particularly important for him, and he worked hard on getting it right. Consider the beginning of Francesca's famous speech in Longfellow's manuscript translation, now at the Houghton Library: "Sitteth the city, wherein I was born, / Upon the sea-shore where the Po descends / To be at peace with all in peace with all its followers" (fig. 5). (Longfellow had underlined this passage in his working edition). Newton Arvin once faulted Longfellow for using too many archaisms,³² but I have found that he usually has a good reason for choosing an old-fashioned word or phrase over a more current one. Here, for example, the antiquated "sitteth" allows him to reproduce, better than he could have done with the more colloquial "sits," the sound effect created by the Italian "Siede," which also has two syllables. Note too his translation of *terra* as "city," which allows Longfellow to create a subtle alliterative echo effect with "sitteth." The sentence thus acquires, in English, the musical flow it has in Italian, where it evokes the river Po flowing into the ocean. Longfellow had no problem with straying from the Italian text when he felt it was necessary. He had not even attempted to reproduce Dante's terza rima: "something must be relinquished," he reasoned in his journal on May 7, 1864, while he was already hard at work, "Shall it be the beautiful rhyme, that blossoms all along the lines, like honeysuckle in a hedge? I fear it must, in order to retain something more precious than rhyme, namely fidelity—truth—the life of the hedge itself."³³ Being faithful to the original text, for him, meant not being slavishly devoted to it but being attuned to the "life" of

the text, capturing its essence as a living, breathing thing (and the sound of the original was, more often than not, part of that life).

As a whole, however, Longfellow's translation creates an English text that would wherever possible remind his readers of the Italian original—an approach that mightily confused George Ticknor, Longfellow's predecessor at Harvard, who told him that he would “always read your translation with the original ringing in my ears,” a rather backhanded compliment. Ticknor added that he also believed Longfellow had not delivered what “an *absolutely English* reader covets.”³⁴

Quite a few other changes Longfellow made later, in the page proofs, perhaps as a result of his discussions with members of the Dante Club, perhaps because he himself had changed his mind about a word or phrase. In line 99 of *Inferno* 5, for example, “to be at peace with all his followers” becomes, in the published version, “to *rest* in peace with all his *retinue*,” a version that is closer to the Italian original because it offers an equivalent for Dante's internal rhyme in that line (“per aver *pace* co' *seguaci* sui”).³⁵ And “Love, that in gentle heart is soon enkindled” turns into “Love, that on gentle heart doth swiftly seize,” a more demonstratively poetic line that also conveys more accurately the violence of the transformation Francesca says she experienced. Longfellow's personal copy of a later, inexpensive edition of *Inferno*, published in Leipzig, shows that he just couldn't stop revising even after his translation had already been printed. In line 135 he crossed out the bland word “one,” substituting for it a word he added in pencil in the margin, “man”: “This *man*, who ne'er from me shall be divided, / Kissed me upon the mouth all palpitating.”³⁶ The intensity of the lovers' desire is much better captured by this phrase, which, incidentally, is not a close translation of the Italian “cotanto amante” (*Inf.* 5.134). Since the word *love* doesn't appear in it, Longfellow's improved English version here stresses—more than the Italian original—the physical nature of Francesca's experience.

Longfellow was too much of a poet himself to read Francesca's story as merely a warning that sin reaps its own rewards. Put differently, he couldn't bring himself to believe that Dante had composed *Inferno* only to make his readers shudder and hurry upward in their journey to enlightenment. He championed the sinner Francesca not because he was a hopeless romantic—a fool for love, so to speak—but because he couldn't ignore Dante's poetry for the sake of his allegory. In his 1838 Harvard lectures on Dante we find him extolling Dante's ability to describe the

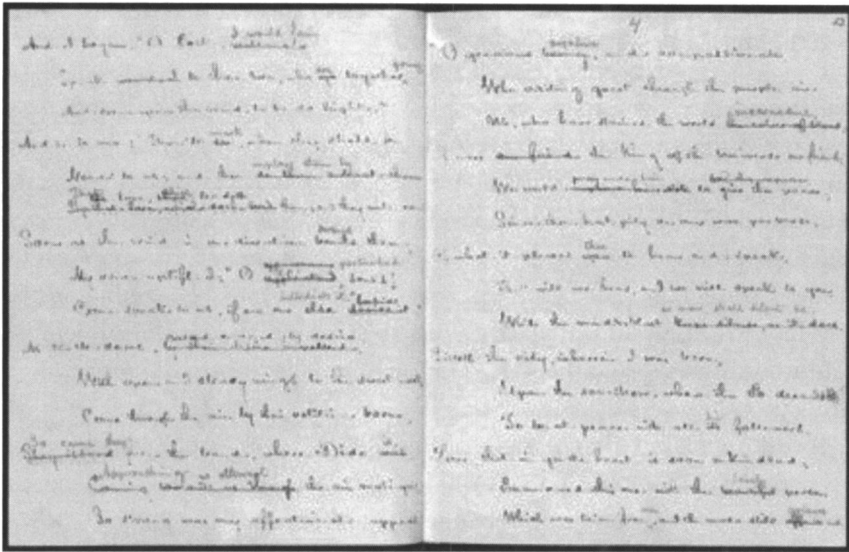


Figure 5: Longfellow, autograph edition of his translation of Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 5, pp. 52–53; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (111), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

world in all its physical concreteness. Longfellow's Dante was a wanderer, a fugitive aching with longing for his native city from which he had been expelled for trivial reasons, maybe even the result of a drunken fight.³⁷ Dante's numbing sense of deprivation heightened his awareness for what was around him, lending power and plasticity to everything he described in his poetry. When Dante approached the gates of a city, he would always remember that he could never enter Florence again. "When he beheld the towers of feudal castles cresting the distant hills, he felt how superb and arrogant are the strong; how much abused the weak."³⁸ In an extraordinary act of empathy, Longfellow reproduces Dante's sense of displacement, enlivening the landscape this Italian Odysseus traverses with ubiquitous reminders of his exile:

Every book and river reminded him of the Arno, and the brooklets that descend from Cassentin. Every voice he heard told him, by its strange accent, that he was an exile; and every home he saw, said to him in its sympathies even, "Thou art homeless!" All these things found expression in his poems; and even much of the beautiful description of landscape, and the morning and the evening bears the freshness of that impression, which is made on the mind of a foot-traveller, who sits under the trees at noon, and, leaves or enters towns when the morning or

evening bells are ringing, and he has only to hear “how many a tale their music tells.” In this Dante resembles Homer.³⁹

Fueled by his own memories of having visited Florence, Longfellow evokes for his students an image of Dante’s hometown, claiming that he cannot possibly describe what then in fact he does go on to describe, and quite vividly: “Could I paint to you in words the city of Florence, as I see it before me now;—lying in the broad lap of the Val d’Arno with its church-spires, and palaces, and pleasant streets, and statues standing in the public squares;—and the great golden river running from the Appenines [*sic*] into the sea;—and the gay and motley populace, pouring in from the city gates.”⁴⁰

For Longfellow, the teeming reality of the scenes Dante paints for his readers supersedes the rigors of the theological allegory, which, Longfellow said provocatively, at times appeared to be more of a “blemish” than a source of beauty.⁴¹ It is, argues Longfellow, Dante *the poet* rather than Dante the theologian who “excites us; and carries us forward with him.”⁴² As if he were a Francesca da Rimini blaming her passionate feelings on a book she has read, Longfellow then went on to detail his own reading experience, in words that must have puzzled his students, who were, we may assume, expecting to be guided rather than confused: “In every Canto I am deceived,” said Longfellow: “For the moment I believe it all.”⁴³ For Longfellow, *Paradiso* wasn’t all that much different from *Inferno*: “Even when Beatrice reproves Dante, I am betrayed into pity for him, he seems so fallen and degraded, and she so glorious, holy and high. I forget that it is the poet’s imagination, which has made this so: which has given her those bright garments, and clad him in the weeds of humility.” Such forgetting is, in Longfellow’s view, legitimate. Even in *Paradiso*, then, Dante, for Longfellow, has remained an effective teller of tales. The ethereal Beatrice needs the sensuous Francesca to seem holy, just as the poet needs lowercase words to celebrate the uniqueness of the “uppercase incarnate Word,” in Rosanna Warren’s phrase.⁴⁴ In *Inferno* human bodies bleed and fester; in *Purgatorio* they float, as insubstantial “as the sun’s ray through the misty atmosphere breaks into various hues” (Longfellow is referring to *Purg.* 25.91 here), while in *Paradiso* the blessed spirits appear “clothed in light,” like stars or precious stones or “the flashing of the sun upon the sea,” fleeting “pulsations of sound and brightness.” But in order to understand what it means to see a body bathed in light, one needs to have seen, known, the body that writhes, spits, and bleeds.⁴⁵

There is one interesting challenge, however, to this sympathetic reading of Dante's Francesca. When in *Inferno* 5 Francesca refers to the delight she and Paolo felt when turning the pages of *Lancelot du Lac*, she seems to identify herself as the uncritical reader of the kind of derivative literature that some of Longfellow's less charitable critics claimed that Longfellow too was writing. I am thinking here particularly of Margaret Fuller's withering critique of Longfellow's poetry, with its "Preciosos and Preciosas, its Vikings and knights, and cavaliers, its flowers of all kinds, and wild flowers of none." As far as Fuller was concerned, Longfellow didn't even deserve to be called a plagiarist since this would presuppose that "originality" could be applied to his poetry in the first place. Longfellow "borrows incessantly, and mixes what he borrows" (which is precisely what Dante's Francesca did, as we have seen).⁴⁶

But Longfellow wasn't ashamed of this link between him and Francesca. In fact, to his mind, Francesca wasn't just a reader, she was a *poet* too, a sentimentalist poet, one who knew how to impress her listeners, to make them feel what she did, and powerfully so. "Did you not feel so likewise?" Longfellow asked his friend and publisher James Fields when he sent him his poem about Nathaniel Hawthorne's death and funeral, neatly summarizing the premise of his relentlessly accessible, seamlessly transparent poetry.⁴⁷ We need to remember here too that Dante faints when he is done listening to Francesca, thus reproducing the powerful, ecstatic experience she had when reading *Lancelot du Lac*. (Dante had fainted once before, but that was when, at the end of *Inferno* 3, Charon was carrying him over to the shores of Hell and the earth began to tremble). Francesca is the living—ahem, dead—proof that poetry *does* make things happen, in terms of what befell *her* and in terms of what she has now learned to do to *others*. In a sense, then, Francesca embodies the poet in his or her rawest, neediest form—a plagiarizing poet maybe, but an extremely efficient player upon people's emotions. Hence Longfellow's readiness to identify with her, to merge her voice with his own—as he did, literally, at the beginning of one of his most personal poems, "My Lost Youth," a *recherche du temps perdu*, written, after a "day filled with pain," in 1855: "Often I think of the beautiful town / That is seated by the sea."⁴⁸ Like Dante and Dante's Francesca, Longfellow had felt an irrepressible longing for "my native town," and the poem wistfully conjures up the sights and sounds of his youth, "the sheen of the far-surrounding seas" as well as "the trees that o'ershadow each well-known

street” (*Works*, 3:39–42). Here, Dante’s native Florence, Francesca’s native Ravenna and Longfellow’s native Portland, three cities one doesn’t often hear mentioned in the same breath, merge, as do the identities of a thirteenth-century Catholic noblewoman from Italy and a Unitarian lawyer’s son from Maine—a move that would not have surprised that other Francesca Longfellow had married in 1843. Henry Longfellow, she told her friend Emmeline Austin Wadsworth in March 1851, was “truly favored by the women,” because he had something of the woman in himself: “He has just that tenderness and sympathy in his own nature which sounds the depths of theirs.”⁴⁹

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NOTES

1. “O tu che vieni al doloroso ospizio / . . . / guarda com’ entri e di cui tu ti fide,” *Inferno* 5.16, 19. The Italian text of the *Commedia* used here is that edited by Giorgio Petrocchi and published by Mondadori (Milan, 1966–67; 2nd ed., Florence: Le Lettere, 1994). Throughout this essay, I will be using Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s translation, vols. 9–11 of the Craigie edition of *The Complete Writings of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904). I would like to thank my friend Raphael Falco (University of Maryland–Baltimore County) for his help with this essay. Quotations and illustrations from the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers at Houghton Library are used with permission of Leslie Morris, Curator of Books and Manuscripts, Houghton Library, and with permission of the Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

2. Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno: A Verse Rendering for the Modern Reader* by John Ciardi (New York: Mentor, 1954), 58. See also *The Inferno of Dante: A New Verse Translation* by Robert Pinsky (1994; New York: Noonday, 1996), 37; Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Robert and Jean Hollander (2000; New York: Anchor, 2002), 93; and Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, vol. 1, *The Inferno*, trans. and ed. Robin Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin, 2006), 28. Longfellow’s predecessor Henry Cary, who translated the *Inferno* in 1805, has “light was silent all” (*The Vision of Dante Alighieri or Hell Purgatory and Paradise Translated by the Rev. H. F. Cary* [London: J. M. Dent, 1908], 19). Dante had used a similar synesthesia earlier, in *Inferno* 1.60, where, astray in the forest shortly before he meets his guide, Dante feels himself being pushed farther and farther into a place “where the sun is silent” (“là dove ’l sole tace”).

3. *Dante’s Vita Nuova: A New Edition*, ed. and trans. Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 22. Pasquini and Quaglio, in their commentary on *Inferno* 5, point out the persistence of Dante’s youthful memories and infatuations (“la complicità affettiva e la tenerezza per certe memorie e infatuazioni giovanili,” Dante Alighieri, *Commedia: Inferno*, ed. Emilio Pasquini and Antonio Quaglia, 7th ed. (1982; Milan: Garzanti, 1992), [58]).

4. Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice* (London: Faber & Faber, 1944), 118.

5. *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine: Cantica I, Hell*, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 102.

6. Dante, *Inferno*, trans. Hollander, 111–12.

7. *Ibid.*, 109–10.

8. Irma Brandeis, *The Ladder of Vision: A Study of Dante's Comedy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1962), 27–40.
9. Thomas William Parsons, "Francesca da Rimini. A Picture by Ary Scheffer," *Poems* (Boston, 1854), 182.
10. *Plays and Poems by George H. Boker*, vol. 1 (Boston, 1856), 460. Longfellow claimed that he held Boker, "both as a poet and as man," in high esteem; see his letter to the Union League of Philadelphia, 18 December 1871, *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, ed. Andrew Hilen, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1966–82), 5:480.
11. On Longfellow and Don Quixote, see Iris Lilian Whitman, *Longfellow and Spain* (New York: Instituto de las Españas, 1927), 124–29; and my *Longfellow Redux*, rev. ed., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 195–96.
12. Peter Levine, "Why Dante Damned Francesca da Rimini," *Philosophy and Literature* 23, no. 2 (1999): 334–350; *Dante's Vita Nuova*, ed. Musa, 36 (my translation).
13. Some critics have accused Francesca of an intentional cover-up, an attempt to hide the fact that it was she who seduced Paolo, "thus revealing the lengths to which she is capable of going, in order to keep from recognizing, and confessing, the true nature of her sin." In other words, Francesca tricks Dante and thus deceives the reader too. See Anna Hatcher and Mark Musa, "The Kiss: *Inferno* V and the Old French Prose Lancelot," *Comparative Literature* 20, no. 2 (1968): 97–109, here 108.
14. See Leigh Hunt, *The Story of Rimini* (London, 1816), and Keats, "A dream, after reading Dante's episode of Paolo and Francesca" (1820).
15. Longfellow was aware of the discrepancy between the French original and Francesca's recreation of it. Omnivorous poet-scholar that he was, he had checked his copy of *Lancelot du Lac* and included the relevant quote (from Alfred Delvau's 1862 *Bibliothèque bleue* edition) in his notes (*Works* 9:226): "La Reine . . . le prit par le menton et le baisa assez longuement en presence de Gallehault" (The queen took him by the chin and kissed him at great length in Gallehault's presence).
16. Edgar Allan Poe, review of Longfellow, *Poems on Slavery*, etc. (1845), *Essays and Criticism*, ed. G. R. Thompson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 761. For more on Longfellow's view of poetry as the distribution of common cultural goods, see *Longfellow Redux*.
17. Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from His Journals and Correspondence* (Boston, 1891), 1:286.
18. Longfellow, "Lecture on 'Divina Commedia.' May 22, 1838. Midnight," Lectures on Dante, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (106), 40, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
19. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850), in Melville, *Moby-Dick*, ed. Hershel Parker and Harrison Hayford, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2002), 526–27.
20. Longfellow to Charles Sumner, March 27, 1852, *Letters* 5:337. On Longfellow and "world literature," see chapter 8 of my *Public Poet, Private Man: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at 200* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Library, 2007).
21. See, for example, Benjamin B. Alexander, "Dante's *Divine Comedy* in America," *Modern Age* 47, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 270–73.
22. Longfellow, "Lecture on 'Divina Commedia,'" 2.
23. "Francesca speaks here, and then continues to speak through the words of the poet 'come colui che piange.'" See *Inferno* 5.126.
24. Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (178).
25. Longfellow to George Washington Greene, December 27, 1828, *Letters*, 1:284.
26. For an amusing portrait of Greene ("smooth as curds") and his friendship with Longfellow, see William Dean Howells, *Literary Friends and Acquaintance*, ed. David F. Hiatt and Edwin H. Cady (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 163.
27. Longfellow, May 17, 1838, Journal, February 27–December 21, 1838, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (144).
28. Longfellow, December 21, 1845, May 26, and June 22, 1846, in Journal, October 1, 1845–28 February 28, 1847, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (200).
29. Leo Ewals, *Ary Scheffer: Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Niemegeue: n.p., 1977), 61.

30. Longfellow, April 3, 1848, in Journal, March 1, 1847–December 31, 1848, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (201).
31. Visual representations of Francesca and Paolo continued to be controversial. When Rodin's *Le baiser* arrived in Chicago for the 1892 fair, it had to be sequestered in a separate room, accessible only to visitors with special permission. See Ionel Jianou, *Rodin* (Paris: Arted, 1979), 61.
32. Newton Arvin, *Longfellow: His Life and Work* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 253.
33. Longfellow, Journal, January 1, 1863–December 17, 1869, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (210).
34. Ticknor to Longfellow, June 1, 1867, in Samuel Longfellow, *Life* 3:90–91 (my emphasis).
35. That said, Longfellow's pun on the common epitaph "rest in peace" is not in Dante's original (which has "aver pace" and not "riposare in pace").
36. See Longfellow's own copy of the Tauchnitz edition of *The Inferno* (Leipzig, 1867), 31, Houghton Library, Harvard University, *AC85.L.8605.865dd v.1. For more on Longfellow's Dante translation, see my *Longfellow Redux*, 258–73, and my *Public Poet, Private Man*, 153–68.
37. See Longfellow, "Life of Dante," Lectures on Dante, MS Am 1340 (106), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, 14: "The old Florentines were an heroic people. . . . The old scutcheon of the state was a white lily in a field of red. Innocence protected by the blood of the brave. But the Guelfs changed it to a red lily in a white field;—Innocence was stained—the blood of the brave was white. For now had come the days of tavern quarrels, and street brawls.—and disaffection of the poor towards the rich—and barricades. Something grotesque and comic was mingling with the chivalrous and heroic. . . . The very exile of Dante may be traced back to a drunken quarrel between Godfrey Cancellieri and his cousin Amadoro in a tavern at Pistoia!"
38. Longfellow, "Lecture on 'Divina Commedia,'" 50–51.
39. Longfellow, "Lecture on 'Divina Commedia,'" 50–52.
40. Longfellow, "Life of Dante," 49.
41. Longfellow, "Life of Dante," 41–42.
42. Longfellow, "Lecture on 'Divina Commedia,'" 54.
43. *Ibid.*, 54.
44. Rosanna Warren, "Words and Blood," *The Poets' Dante*, ed. Peter S. Hawkins and Rachel Jacoff (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 333–43.
45. Longfellow, "Lecture on 'Divina Commedia,'" 83.
46. Margaret Fuller, "Review of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poems*," *New-York Daily Tribune*, December 10, 1845, *Margaret Fuller, Critic: Writings from the New-York Tribune, 1844–1846*, ed. Judith Mattson Bean and Joel Myerson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 285–92.
47. Longfellow to James Fields, June 23, 1864, *Letters*, 4:417. On Longfellow's brand of "sentimentalism," see the introduction to *Public Poet, Private Man*, 1–16.
48. Longfellow records the genesis of "My Lost Youth" in a journal entry for March 29, 1855, Journal, September 1, 1853–December 31, 1855, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (206).
49. Fanny Appleton Longfellow to Emmeline Austin Wadsworth, March 18, 1851, *Mrs. Longfellow: Selected Letters and Journals of Fanny Appleton Longfellow*, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956), 177.

Dante, Schelling, and Longfellow in the Classroom

WAI CHEE DIMOCK

I'd like to begin with Longfellow in the classroom because the way Dante is taught—always an interesting subject—has recently come in for some especially colorful treatment. From Matthew Pearl's *The Dante Club*, we know that James Russell Lowell, Longfellow's successor at Harvard, had gotten into a fight with the Harvard Corporation over the Dante class he was teaching. For members of the Corporation, "it was a matter of principle . . . that they knew nothing of the living languages."¹ The *Commedia*, written in one of those living languages, was suspect on that count. And it does not help that this vulgar tongue is so good at depicting vulgar things. In a dramatic encounter between Lowell and Thomas Hill, president of Harvard, the president triumphantly produces a document, a stinging condemnation of the *Divine Comedy*, by a "recently deceased British poet."² "We hold our nostrils as we read," it says, "we cover up our ears. Did one ever before see brought together such striking odors, filth, excrement, blood, mutilated bodies, agonizing shrieks, mythical monsters of punishment? Seeing this, I cannot but consider it the most immoral and impious book that ever was written."³

This capsule summary of the *Divine Comedy* is immediately recognizable—recognizable, that is, as the summary of just one canticle, *Inferno*. This is a fictive scenario, of course, but it is not very far from the historical (and current) truth, since *Inferno* is in fact the canticle most readers are familiar with, perhaps the only canticle they know. What does it mean for the *Divine Comedy* to exist in the popular imagination only as one-third of itself? And what does it say about the poem that this one third is apparently coherent, self-contained, even separable from the rest?

I'd like to use these questions as an entry point to Longfellow as an exemplary reader of Dante. Longfellow, of course, did not read just one canticle, but, even with the benefit of the entire poem, his view of the *Divine Comedy* is remarkably close to the popular understanding. Beginning with his first intense engagement with the *Divine Comedy* at the start of his career, Longfellow always focused on *Inferno* as the defining canticle. In *Outre-Mer* he described his life in Rome in the summer of 1828: "At midnight, when the crowd is gone, I retire to my chamber, and, poring over the gloomy pages of Dante, . . . protract my nightly vigil till the morning star is in the sky."⁴ Almost from the first, Longfellow's Dante had a dark tone, a "gloom" deep and abiding, not to be dispelled even by the light of *Paradiso*. As he began teaching Dante at Harvard in 1838, he did some translations on the side—"The Celestial Pilot," "Terrestrial Paradise," "Meeting of Dante and Beatrice"—but even these light-filled episodes were subsequently published in a collection with this telling title: *Voices from the Night* (1839). "Dark" was a word he used over and over again to describe Dante, or at least the effect of reading Dante.

This darkness not only enveloped Longfellow as a reader; it also filtered into the way he taught. And as a teacher Longfellow was an especially interesting case since his job description was of course a nineteenth-century one, with fields of knowledge broadly defined and in many ways more forward-looking than those of the twentieth century. Longfellow took seriously the plural form of his appointment as the Smith Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures, and he did not take it for granted that literatures should be segregated by nationalities. Being himself a superb linguist, with a knowledge of some eight or nine languages, including Icelandic, he saw no reason to limit his teaching to just one national tradition. "Much is said now-a-days of a national literature," he wrote in his journal in 1847.⁵ "Does it mean anything? . . . We have, or shall have, a composite one, embracing French, Spanish, Irish, English, Scotch, and German peculiarities."

In particular, Longfellow made a point of including the German tradition even when he was teaching Dante. He made a point of translating and reading aloud to his students Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling's essay on Dante. He probably has his reasons for singling out this essay. His journal of April 18, 1846 reads as follows:

Translating Schelling's paper on "Dante in a philosophical point of view;" deep,—obscure, rather. To the student of Dante, interesting, though throwing much "darkness visible" upon the subject to minds not philosophic.

There is that word *dark* again. And it is repeated yet again in his journal entry on April 23: "Read to the class Schelling's essay. It must have been darkness deep to them." This kind of darkness, sitting on the minds of Harvard undergraduates, is no doubt amusing. But there is another kind of darkness that is not—a darkness that seems to defy the tripartite structure of the *Divine Comedy*, reversing its teleology, staying with the initial darkness rather than proceeding as planned to the realm of light and undermining the unity of the narrative—its ability to impose a single directional arrow.

Perhaps that is why Longfellow was interested in Schelling in the first place. For Schelling, the *Divine Comedy* is the prototype of all modern poetry precisely because of this severability and reversibility, this openness to being broken off before the assigned ending. Not only does it have a strict ordering among its three canticles, but it can also unravel precisely because that ordering is so strict. Its regimenting drive carries a chaotic spin. In that sense the poem is both structure and anti-structure, both the most uncompromising of narrative sequences and, in the long run, the most subject to compromise. This is what Schelling says, in any case, in Longfellow's translation:

The division of the universe and the arrangement of the material according to the three kingdoms of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, independently of the peculiar meaning of these ideas in Christian theology, are also a general symbolic form, so that one does not see why under the same form every remarkable age should not have its own *Divine Comedy* . . . which in its filling up may be infinitely varied, as by the power of original invention it can be quickened into new life.⁶

The tightly wound poem can be unwound and rewound over and over again. Its tripartite structure can be taken apart and reassembled. Every new circumstance will give it new contents. And every new generation will make it its own. This is what Schelling believes, and this is what Longfellow wanted his students to see, what he expressly translated for them. For both, the *Divine Comedy* stands at the center of human history, but not as a monument of stone. Even though this poem might look like a finished product, with its one hundred cantos clearly numbered, it is actually radically unfinished. The poem is anything but a closed book: it has no way of shutting its doors on new development.

What does it mean for the poem to be permanently, almost helplessly, open in this way? One implication is that the poem might be nonproprietary in the most basic sense—beyond anyone's ownership, beyond anyone's structural dictate. There is nothing to stop readers from picking one particular canticle and giving it special attention. And of the three, *Inferno* is the one most likely to be singled out in this way, marked by the differential weight assigned by readers:

The *Inferno* is not only distinguished from the other parts by the external form of its representation but also by the circumstance that it is peculiarly the realm of forms, and consequently the most plastic part of the poem.⁷

The “plastic” *Inferno* is super-responsive to readers, who have no compunction about laying their hands on it. It stands apart from the other two canticles because it is the one that can be molded over and over again: lending itself both to routine touch-ups and to major conceptual overhaul. Every time it is given this special treatment, it is lifted out of its original context and granted a solo performance, leaving behind *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. And every time this happens, the *Divine Comedy* becomes a different poem, with a different scaffolding, a different dynamic governing its individual parts. Restructuring is built into the emerging life of the poem. This changes not only the primacy claimable by each of the three canticles but also the semantic order legible in each. For Longfellow as for Schelling, it is this structural transformation that gives the poem its undying life and that makes one particular canticle the force behind its longevity. *Inferno* is that motor force, and, for at least one of its fans, that fact ought to be centrally acknowledged in the title of the poem. On May 24, 1846, Longfellow wrote in his journal: “Finished the *Inferno* with my class; and am not sorry. Painful Tragedy, called by its author Comedy!”

The *Commedia* is a misnomer as far as Longfellow is concerned. That title tries to subordinate its “dark” canticle, but, if Schelling and Longfellow are any indication, readers seem to have found a way of resisting this. Longfellow is not usually thought of as this kind of activist reader. Too many of us think of him as genteel, lightweight, his hands tied by his social privilege and popular success. But his reading of the *Divine Comedy* points to a different profile: self-consciously rebellious, playing fast and loose with the narrative sequence of what he reads. This becomes especially pronounced when it comes to his work of translation. Longfellow

translated the *Divine Comedy* over a period of twenty years, and not in the order dictated by Dante. He translated *Purgatorio* first: fifteen cantos in 1843 and, after a break of ten years, the other eighteen cantos in 1853. *Paradiso* was translated after another long break, and quite slowly, between March 1862 and February 1863. *Inferno*, on the other hand, took just a month to finish, from March to April, 1863. This reversed sequence is the one that makes the most sense to Longfellow, because the poem's original teleology—its movement from darkness to light—seems hard to sustain, given what Longfellow is seeing all around him. When he came to write the history of the New World, focusing on the Salem witch trials and the persecution of the Quakers, he calls his play *The New England Tragedies*.

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NOTES

1. Matthew Pearl, *The Dante Club* (New York: Random House, 2003), 30.
2. *Ibid.*, 30.
3. *Ibid.*, 30–31.
4. Longfellow, *Outre-Mer and Drift-wood* (Boston, 1886), 239.
5. January 6, 1847, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340, Houghton Library, Harvard University. All other citations to the journals are from this collection.
6. Longfellow's translation of Schelling, "Divina Commedia," *Graham's Magazine*, June 1850. This essay appears only in the first edition of Longfellow's *Prose Works* (Boston, 1857), vol. 1, 434–449, quotation from 441–42.
7. *Ibid.*, 447.

Search for the Ten Privately Printed Copies of Longfellow's Translation of the *Divine Comedy* "In Commemorazione del secentesimo Anniversario della Nascita di Dante Alighieri"

JOAN NORDELL

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow privately printed the first volume of his translation of Dante's *Divina Commedia* to meet a deadline. His translation was the first by an American writer and the seventh by a writer in the English language.¹ After an interrupted period of more than two decades, Longfellow completed the translation in April 1863. Instead of revising and publishing the work right away, he took the advice of his friend and fellow Dantist, Charles Eliot Norton, to "keep back" publication to coincide with the Festival in Florence in May 1865 commemorating the six hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri.² What began as a dedicated but leisurely effort turned into a rush to privately print *Inferno* for the celebration in 1865, followed by the private issue of *Purgatorio* in 1866 and *Paradiso* in 1867. This private issue was a literary and spiritual journey for Longfellow, as it had been for Dante—each writing in the language of his people, Dante in the Italian vernacular and Longfellow in English—fulfilling for Longfellow a long-time ambition to make the great work accessible to fellow Americans. This paper outlines the history of the private issue of the translation *In Commemorazione del secentesimo Anniversario della Nascita di Dante Alighieri*, of which the first volume was printed in time for the Dante sexcentenary, and records the search for the current location of the ten copies.

Longfellow spent three years in Europe following his graduation from Bowdoin College in 1825 in preparation for a professorship in modern languages at his alma mater. It was during his visit to Italy in 1828 and 1829 Italy that, immersed in languages and literatures of the old world, he decided to devote his life to scholarship and literature,³ and it was during these travels that he became a serious student of Dante and the *Divina Commedia*. His deep interest in Dante grew, becoming even personal when, on a trip to Europe to recover his health, he wrote in 1842 at the age of thirty-five in a sonnet, unpublished in his lifetime, that "Half of my life is gone."⁴ His grandson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana (Harry), explained that, like Dante, "filled with sorrow and remorse, he seemed to have lost his way, mid-way through his life."⁵

Another less personal but compelling concern at that time was the bitter conflict over slavery that was beginning to tear the nation apart and at the same time inspired Longfellow's *Poems on Slavery* (1842). The poems were among the first literature for the abolitionist cause.

Longfellow began translating the *Commedia* on his return to Cambridge, partly at the suggestion of Mrs. Andrews Norton, wife of one of America's early Dantists and mother of Charles Eliot Norton. She believed that translating Dante would console him during what seemed to be a long fruitless pursuit of the affection of Fanny Appleton, daughter of a prominent Boston merchant.⁶ Translating Dante also gave focus to Longfellow's continuing devotion to the "poema sacro" and broadened the scope of his teaching at Harvard College, where he succeeded George Ticknor as the second Abiel Smith Professor of Romance Languages in 1836. In the second year as the Smith Professor, he switched from discussing Goethe to Dante, interleaving translations of the cantos into his copy of the *Divina Commedia*. In a lecture in 1838 he said, "I rank him as one of the three greatest poets whom the world has known. The other two are Homer and Shakspeare [*sic*]." Longfellow continued in earnest with *Purgatorio*, his favorite of the three canticles. Three cantos ("The Celestial Pilot," "The Terrestrial Paradise," and "Beatrice") were published and well received in *Voices of the Night* (1839), the first Dante translation by an American seen in this country.⁷ However, Longfellow soon gave up the enterprise for a ten-year period, during which time he devoted himself to his own poetry ("The Belfry of Bruges" [1845], *Evangeline* [1847], "Kavanagh" [1849], *The Seaside and the Fireside* [1850], and "The Golden

Legend" [1851]). His success enabled him to give up his Harvard professorship, having produced no new work in 1852 and 1853—a hiatus he attributed to the bureaucratic tedium of academic life and failure to modify his teaching duties⁸ in the relatively new Department of Modern Languages.

A seesaw pattern emerged in his writing: when creativity dried up, he turned to translation and vice versa. He wrote in 1853, "In weariness of spirit, and despair of writing anything original, I turned again to-day to dear old Dante; and resumed my translation of the *Purgatorio*, where I left it in 1843! Find great delight in the work. It diffused its benediction through the day."⁹ But he again returned to original poems, publishing *The Song of Hiawatha* in 1855 and *The Courtship of Miles Standish* in 1858, confirming his standing as the most popular poet in the English language.¹⁰ However, following Fanny's tragic death in July 1861, he resumed his Dante translation, finding again that Dante provided consolation and satisfaction.

The length of Longfellow's Dante journey exceeded his perception of it. Noted bibliographer Luther Samuel Livingston twitted the poet's memory, saying Longfellow refused to admit how long a journey it was, twenty or even thirty years.¹¹ "The fact is," Longfellow asserted, that he "was engaged upon it, as I find by dates in the ms.—just two years (Feb. 20, 1862 to Feb. 4, 1864)."¹² He wrote more realistically in March 1864: "Finished to-day the revision and copying, or rewriting, the translating of the '*Purgatorio*,' so as to have it all of one piece with the rest; it having been made at different times, long ago, and never revised. Now I have the whole before me of uniform style and workmanship."¹³ By whatever count, it was a long, consuming journey for the American poet and his passion for the *Divina Commedia*.

The poet had completed his translation of the *Commedia* in early 1863, writing in his Journal on April 16, "Finished the translation of the *Inferno*. . . . I have written a canto a day, thirty-four days in succession with many anxieties and interruptions. Now I must make some Notes."¹⁴ Considering the lightning speed of his "a-canto-a-day" translation, publication did not proceed promptly. "Dante is at a deadlock," he wrote to George Washington Greene in February 1864, "and it has been for a long while, ever since my Washington journey [to bring back his wounded son, Charley, who had volunteered for military service without Longfellow's knowledge]."¹⁵ The electroplating of the text went slowly. Longfellow had taken the advice Norton offered in April 1863 to refrain from

publishing until the 1865 festival celebrating the six hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth, to which all lovers of the Florentine poet had been invited to contribute, and he took his time. But as the Dante festival approached and time grew short, Longfellow knew that only *Inferno* was ready to be printed.¹⁶ Longfellow considered it a draft, a "trial."¹⁷

In mid-January 1865, recognizing the imminence of the festival deadline, he gave up writing historical notes, telling Greene, "I must have one copy printed to send to Italy. I cannot resist the temptation."¹⁸ Longfellow consulted with Greene on the proper grammar for the Italian dedication, ultimately choosing his own. On February 6 he wrote, "The Commemoration copy is in the binder's hands." On February 9 the edition was copyrighted, and on February 10 Longfellow dispatched *Inferno* to his lifelong friend Senator Charles Sumner in Washington, urging him to hand it over to the Italian minister, Giuseppe Bertinati, to be forwarded by diplomatic bag to George P. Marsh, U.S. minister to Italy.¹⁹ Longfellow counseled Sumner again on March 13, "I hope you have already handed the Dante volume over to the Italian Minister. That will be the safest and best way. Particularly as I hear that Mr. Marsh is on his way home. Pray do not lose time. If you do, the whole thing will miscarry, and be a fiasco." This is a rather testy reaction for the normally amiable Longfellow but, as Norton wrote, "Mr. Longfellow determined to send his translation to her [Florence] as a tribute from America."²⁰ Sumner instead sent the book in a diplomatic bag to London, on to Turin and to Marsh,²¹ and *Inferno* arrived in time.²² It was placed in the festival exhibition of artistic and literary works at the Palazzo del Podestà (now the Bargello Museum), a short distance from the Casa di Dante. Longfellow's *Inferno* was among the thirty complete or partial translations of the work.²³

Longfellow was chauvinistic about his *Inferno*, which was bound in three-quarters red morocco with marbled paper board sides, printed on 10" × 7" with top edges plain or gilt, and resplendent with gold stamping and decoration. In his letter of February 10 to Charles Sumner, Longfellow wrote, "I want you and the Minister to look at the volume. It is beautiful, worthy of the Italian Press; all written, printed, bound in Cambridge, Middlesex County, Massachusetts!" Ten unnumbered copies of the translation were privately printed for Longfellow's use, although there has been a longstanding question about whether ten or twelve were printed.

Longfellow wrote in his own copy, now in the Houghton Library, that ten copies were printed. The *Inferno* that was rushed to Italy had no manuscript inscription, although in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, sent in successive years, he wrote "10 copies printed."²⁴ But the discrepancy is evident in two manuscript notes in the copy Longfellow gave Norton, the first dated 1876 and the second 1907. In the former, Norton recorded that "only ten copies of this edition were printed"; in the latter, the seventy-nine-year-old claimed that "one of twelve copies were printed in advance of the regular edition." It must be this late attribution by Norton that led the *Bibliography of American Literature* to question the number of copies²⁵—and collectors and bibliographers to state their copies were one of ten or twelve. In a letter of 1872, Mrs. Bigelow Lawrence, whose presentation copy was discovered recently, thanked Longfellow for the gift of one of twelve copies of his translation. But no one, not even Norton, would have known about this citation. There is, in fact, no evidence that Longfellow had more than ten copies at his disposal, unless the printer provided him with additional copies after the "spring" of 1865. At some point, Harry Dana reconsiders and penciled "12" above the word "ten" in his text at the Longfellow House—Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, but he cited only ten copies.²⁶

The private issue was published by Ticknor and Fields, the premier literary publishing house in the United States during the middle of the nineteenth century, and printed at the University Press: Welch, Bigelow, and Company in Cambridge. Spenser is quoted on the title page, reflecting Longfellow's philosophy of literal translation: "I follow here the footing of thy feete / That with thy meaning so I may the rather meete."²⁷ The dedication, "In Commemorazione del secentesimo Anniversario della Nascita di Dante Alighieri," appears on the next recto. An original poem by the poet written on the process of translating the *Divine Comedy* preceded the translated text. The format was replicated in the private printing of ten copies of *Purgatorio* in 1866 and ten of *Paradiso* in 1867, each with its pertinent original poem, and, again, this time, like *Inferno*, without notes. Longfellow presented copies of *Paradiso* to a number of colleagues on February 27, 1867, the date of his sixtieth birthday. Some of the sets had gilt tops and others plain and uncut edges; some bear frayed thin, blue marker ribbons. A slight printing anomaly occurs in that copies of volume 3 have a printer's slug for the twenty-seventh signature in small type at the end of Canto 31 on page 209: "Vol. III. 27."

Ticknor and Fields was also the publisher of one thousand copies of the revised edition, the first public edition, in 1867.²⁸ The three-volume sets were bound in dark green cloth boards, without marbled end papers, or gilt tops, and, of course, with no “In Commemorazione” inscription. Longfellow added another original poem to this edition, making two in each volume, as well as notes—longer than the translation itself—and illustrations. Routledge and Sons in London and Tauchnitz in Leipzig used the plates of this Boston edition of 1867 later that year. Additional editions were published with no textual revisions except for typographical errors until Charles Eliot Norton’s edition in 1886. This edition included revisions in the notes and illustrations Longfellow had planned to use in a new edition before his death in 1882,²⁹ as well as some of Norton’s own changes. A new edition by Matthew Pearl was published in 2003, which includes only Longfellow’s intended revisions and none added by Norton on his own.³⁰ Pearl’s edition was the first printed since 1909. It would have been manna to James Merrill, who cried out in 2001, “Why, oh, why is the Longfellow *Comedy* not in print?”³¹ Indeed Longfellow’s narrative poetry had gone out of favor; moreover, a flood of other translations, including several by students of Norton, were published at the end of the nineteenth century and by other scholars throughout the twentieth.

The remainder of this paper records the search for the current locations of the ten copies of the privately printed edition. I have corrected and updated estimated locations by collectors and bibliographers in their day and have identified for the first time two presentation copies, neither of whose locations can presently be verified. In another case, the provenance and current location is known, but how the copy began its journey is the most mystifying aspect of the entire research.

Despite Longfellow’s fastidious household accounts, donations, and almost everything relating to his writings, he did not record the names of individuals to whom he gave copies of the private issue.³² To find their current locations, I have used *The Bibliography of American Literature*, two bibliographic databases (WorldCat and RLG), and the Internet. I have also been aided by the archives specialist at the Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site.³³

(1) *Biblioteca Società Dantesca Italiana*. Longfellow’s letters record that only one copy of *Inferno* went to Italy. While Theodore W. Koch wrote that

of the ten copies printed, "five were sent to Italy,"³⁴ there is no evidence for more than the copy sent in 1865.³⁵ In May 1867 Longfellow sent privately printed copies of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* to Signor G. Corsini, chair of the Literary Committee of 1865 Dante Festival.³⁶ The three volumes are now in the Fondo Giuliani collection at the Biblioteca Società Dantesca Italiana in Florence.³⁷

Giovan Battista Giuliani (1818–1884) was appointed to the Dante chair at the Istituto di Studi Superiori (now the University of Florence) in 1860. He was a speaker at the three-day Dante Centenario. He died in 1884, leaving his fine and extensive Dante library, including the Longfellow translation, to the city of Florence. He did so with the expectation that it would be housed in the Casa di Dante, which would be open to the public.³⁸ In 1913 the Comune made a perpetual loan of the Giuliani collection to the Società Dantesca, now located in the Palagio dell'Arte della Lana, just a few blocks from the destination of Longfellow's *Inferno* in the Palazzo del Podestà. "Only in copies printed" in Longfellow's hand is found just in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, not *Inferno*, with the Biblioteca's shelfmark number 129 on the spine on all three volumes, and on the inside cover of the first volume the number 276, presumably G. B. Giuliani's own shelfmark. "Fondo Giuliani" is stamped in purple toward the end of each book, as well as the numbers 170, 171, 172 in black in each respective volume. A label on the inside front cover of each book reads as follows: "Società / Dantesca / Italiana / Collezione Dantesca / G. B. Giuliani / II / 129 / Dep. Comune di Firenze." The gilt-topped set has no annotations.

In response to Longfellow's gift to the festival, he was offered and pleased to receive a Centenary Medal from the city of Florence, where he visited during an extensive European trip with his family in 1869.³⁹ On the other hand, despite Longfellow's devotion to Dante and the unification of Italy, he could not accept, for religious and political reasons, a knighthood offered to him by King Victor Emmanuel II. Other copies of the private issue were presented closer to home and found their way into academic libraries from New Hampshire to Florida. On February 27, 1865, his fifty-eighth birthday, Longfellow inscribed a copy of *Inferno* each to Dantists Charles Eliot Norton and James Russell Lowell, who had for several years been advising Longfellow on his translation.⁴⁰ In October of that year, Longfellow formed the Dante Club, which met most Wednesday evenings in the Craigie House library from October 1865 to May

1867, except during summers, working from plates of the original printing to revise the translation for the public edition of 1867. Among others who joined Longfellow at Craigie House less regularly on Wednesday evenings were George Washington Greene, James T. Fields, William Dean Howells, brother-in-law Thomas Gold Appleton, and occasionally Louis Agassiz, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Artists and visitors to Cambridge attended on occasion. Only publisher Fields and Italianist Greene of that group received presentation copies, in addition to the regulars, Norton and Lowell, the two main Dante Club members besides Longfellow.⁴¹

However cordially Longfellow responded to alternative language suggested by his friends, he incorporated suggested revisions selectively.⁴² Although all of them praised Longfellow's achievement at the time,⁴³ Norton omitted Longfellow's translation among those he praised in the preface to his own translation of the *Comedy* in 1890. He did, however, include Longfellow's "Notes and Illustrations" in his "Aids to the Study of the Divine Comedy."⁴⁴ Lowell ranked Longfellow's translation right away as the "best" of the complete English translations—"not as the best possible, by any means, but as the best probable."⁴⁵ He used the word "admirable" only for those fragmentary early versions Longfellow had interleaved in the *Commedia* in his Harvard classes.⁴⁶

(2) *Harvard University: to Charles Eliot Norton.* Longfellow inscribed a copy of *Inferno* to "Charles Eliot Norton/with Kindest regards of the Translator/February 27, 1865." This copy (*AC 85 L86o5 865d (A)), now in Houghton Library, came to the Harvard College Library as a gift from Norton's friends in 1905. Tipped into vol. 1, between the front marbled board and end paper is a sheet of handwritten comments by Norton, dated 1876:

Ten copies only of this edition were printed in honor of the commemoration of Dante's birth in 1865.

The translation was revised and finally published two years later.

The notes on the margins and on slips in this volume contain suggestions of mine, some of which were adopted in the revision.

During the winters of 1863 and 1864 [the years were 1865–1867]⁴⁷ Lowell and I used to meet one evening, every week at Longfellow's to go over the work critically with him. They were delightful evenings,—ending with a supper at which Tom Appleton, Agassiz, Howells were not infrequent guests. C.E.N. 1876.

Volumes 2 and 3 have similar Longfellow inscriptions, dated April 1, 1866, and February 27, 1867, respectively. In addition to numerous substitutions penciled in the margins and a tipped-in note with more suggested revisions in volume 1, Norton added others on a blank flyleaf at the end of that volume, along with eight alternative wordings on a flyleaf at the end of volume 2. Pasted on a blank leaf at the beginning of volume 3 is a clipping from the *Boston Advertiser* of the poem Lowell wrote "To H.W.L. on his [sixtieth] Birthday—27 February 1867." Ever the editor, Norton penciled in revisions for several of Lowell's phrases on the clipping! On the marbled verso of the cover in each volume is the bookplate of the Harvard College Library with the text, "From the Library of Charles Eliot Norton / The Gift of his Friends / MDCCCV." A Houghton Library label appears on the inside back covers.

Norton himself was one of the first individuals to translate into English Dante's *Vita Nuova* (1867), and in 1890 he completed a prose translation of the *Commedia*.

(3) *University of Florida: to James Russell Lowell*. Like Norton's set, Lowell's had gilt tops and was inscribed in like manner on the front flyleaf: "James R. Lowell/with kindest regards / of the Translator. / February 27. 1865." (vol. 1); "James R. Lowell/From the Translator. / March 30. 1866" (vol. 2); and "James R. Lowell / Feb. 27. 1867." (vol. 3). Around 1950 the distinguished collector of American literature Parkman Dexter Howe acquired the set from Mrs. Stanley Cunningham, Lowell's granddaughter, in Connecticut. Howe's handwritten notes and informal typescript of his catalog recorded that his set was one of ten copies.⁴⁸ However, he wrote in "My New England Authors" that his copy was one of twelve,⁴⁹ as the printed catalog of his collection states, now in the Special and Area Studies Collections in the George A. Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida (HWL 196 Howe Coll.).⁵⁰ I speculate that, being well acquainted with the Houghton Library and its collections, Howe revised his number from ten to twelve after seeing there in Norton's presentation copy his second entry (1907). Norton's reference there to twelve copies is the only primary source attesting to the possible existence of more than ten copies. The University of Florida acquired the entire Parkman Dexter Howe collection, including the Longfellow materials, in 1980. The bookplate reads as follows:⁵¹ "The Howe Library / Books and Manuscripts / of / Henry Wadsworth Longfellow / given by General and Mrs. James A. Van

Fleet / 1980–1981 / University of Florida Libraries.” The set has gilt tops; its marbled paper covers and leather corners and spine show more wear than others I have found, indicating greater use than the others by members of the Lowell family and Parkman Howe.

(4) *Harvard University: Longfellow copy.* Longfellow’s own copy remained in his library in Craigie House until it was placed on deposit at the Harvard College Library (*AC85 L86o5 865d (B)) by the Trustees of the Longfellow House in 1960. Included in the deposit of Longfellow papers from which Harvard was invited to select were the manuscript itself of the translation of the *Commedia* (MS Am 1340 111–116) text and notes and the proof sheets for the privately printed edition (*AC 85.L86o5.865da). The deposit also included manuscripts of most of his writings, as well as his letters, some 1,900 that Longfellow sent to others and just under 14,000 that he received. The deposit and subsequent sale, legally transacted for the amount of one dollar to Harvard in 1976, made Harvard the largest repository of Longfellow materials in the world, enhancing its already significant collection of American Literature.⁵² All Longfellow materials from the Trustees of the Longfellow House are housed at the Houghton Library.

Longfellow’s set bears his own simple bookplate (“Henry W. Longfellow”) and the label “Harvard College Library / from the Longfellow Collection / at Craigie House / Deposited by the / Trustees of the Longfellow House Trust / 1960.” Penciled in on a blank flyleaf opposite the title page is the text: “White wrapper inclosed by Longfellow himself / *Inferno* / Original Edition / without notes / only 10 copies printed / for Florence Commemoration.” He kept a copy with uncut edges for himself.

(5) *American Antiquarian Society: to George Washington Greene.* It was also on the February 27, 1865, date that Longfellow sent *Inferno* to George Washington Greene in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. Greene and Longfellow, who both had grandfathers who served under George Washington,⁵³ met and traveled together in Italy during Longfellow’s trip in 1828–29. Greene inspired Longfellow to his lifelong interest in the *Commedia* with a gift to him of the 1820 edition published by Antonio Buttura. Their friendship flourished but was disrupted from 1849 to 1861 when Longfellow was offended by the failure of Greene’s marriage to

Maria Carlotta. There had been domestic troubles, and after Greene lost his position as American consul in Rome and returned to America in 1847 without Maria, he confided there were rumors that his wife was attempting to have the marriage annulled. They were divorced in 1849. Longfellow's admiration for Greene's expertise as an Italian grammarian, however, brought the two together again following Fanny's death and the commencement of the translation.⁵⁴

Greene's inscribed set remained in the family after his death in 1883. The *American Book Prices Current* for 1916 at least listed the sale of this set "from the library of the late George Washington Greene" (lot 755) at the American Art Galleries sale of February 3–4, 1916, for \$680. Presumably the Greene presentation copy was acquired at that sale by Walter Thomas Wallace of South Orange, New Jersey, as no notice of further sales and purchases occurs until Wallace's extensive collection of American literature itself was auctioned at the American Art Association sale in New York City in March 1920. The Wallace auction catalog states this copy (lot 862) is "probably the most valuable of the famous translation known with the exception of the translator's own copy being one of ten copies printed on thicker paper than ordinary issue."⁵⁵ The claim surely was based on a manuscript in Longfellow's hand, carefully pasted in volume 1, listing possible revisions for ten lines in Canto 33 (inadvertently identified as 23) for which he was asking Greene's opinion. All but one of the suggested revisions were made in the 1867 public edition. Greene's copy has gilt tops and plain edges.

Frank Bemis of Beverly, Massachusetts, purchased Greene's copy for \$450 from the Wallace auction through dealer P. K. Foley.⁵⁶ A longtime member and officer of the American Antiquarian Society (AAS), Bemis heeded Director Dr. Clarence S. Brigham's wish to obtain for the Society the "comparatively few first editions in the Bemis collection which the AAS lacked."⁵⁷ A testamentary arrangement concluded ten years before Bemis's death in 1935 put his library in a trust that, after his death, was to be sold for the benefit of the Boston Children's Hospital. In addition, Bemis left a bequest to the AAS of \$5,000 to purchase the desired materials. According to Society letters and annual reports, this was the value placed on these 195 books by Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, Bemis's friend and dealer, who handled the sale with some assistance from colleagues John Fleming and George Goodspeed. The Bemis books were placed at the AAS (call number: First Edition) after Bemis's death, but the bequest

of the \$5,000 was not received until the death of his sister, Gertrude Bemis Bradley.⁵⁸ The set bears bookplates of both Walter Thomas Wallace (“Sperandum est Esperance”) inside the front cover on the left and Frank Brewer Bemis on the right (“Three things to me God lends / old lace, old books, and old friends” 1925). The Longfellow inscriptions are similar to those in other presentation copies: “George W. Greene / with kindest regards of the Translator / February 27 1865”; the date in volume 2 is May 18, 1866, and in volume 3, February 27, 1867.

(6) *Dartmouth College: to James T. Fields*. Publisher James Fields, of Ticknor and Fields, was a personal and professional friend of Longfellow from 1846 until Fields’s death in 1871. He was intimately involved in the Dante translation.⁵⁹ Fields wrote in his copy of *Inferno* that it was given to him “by Longfellow after a dinner, which he gave at his home in Cambridge completing the translation of the Divine Comedy. This copy is one of ten first printed. J. T. F. 1865.” The edges in this copy are uncut and rough. It has marbled covers and spines and is distinguished by perforated dots across the top of the pages in all three volumes. Fields’s set could be considered more remarkable than Greene’s copy, as volume 1 contains the manuscript of the first sonnet Longfellow wrote for the *Comedy*, dated March 29, 1864, “On Translating the Divine Comedy.” It begins famously, “Oft have I seen at some cathedral door / A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat / Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet / Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor / Kneel to repeat his paternoster o’er.”⁶⁰ Another feature of the set is a print of Raphael’s full-length portrait of Dante pasted on the marbled verso of the cover in volume 1. Fields’s wife, Annie Fields, also Longfellow’s friend and a writer,⁶¹ bequeathed the private issue to Dartmouth College (PQ 4315 .L7 1867) in 1915 as part of a “memorial to the celebrated Boston publisher, one hundred books from his famous library.” The books, selected by college librarians, carry a Dartmouth College Library bookplate: “From the Library of Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Fields.”

(7) *University of Virginia*. This set passed through the hands of two of the most important collectors of American literature in twentieth-century America, Carroll A. Wilson and Clifton Waller Barrett. Industrialist Wilson had acquired a copy of the private edition by 1930 at least. A typescript, dated June 23, 1932, of his catalog deposited in Craigie House

(now the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site) brings to light new information about the possibility of another set associated with Italy: "Only ten copies were printed of each volume. Five of these were sent to Italy, although only two of them can be traced, viz., the copy for the celebration and this copy."⁶² Wilson tells Harry Dana in a letter that he "has written the dealer from whom I secured it [crossed out "it" to "them"]", but I have very little hope of his enlarging upon this from Italy."⁶³

Carroll Wilson's catalog (1950), printed for the Scribner's sale of his collection and prepared by his widow, Jean C. S. Wilson, and dealer David Randall at Scribner's after his death, tells a different story.⁶⁴ It makes no mention of the possibility of Wilson's Dante having come from Italy; it also introduces the possibility of a copy having been presented to Thomas B. Aldrich by Longfellow. "Original three-quarters turkey-red morocco . . . All edges wholly uncut . . . In the original binding selected by Longfellow, as are all the known copies . . . Only ten copies were printed of each volume, unnumbered. It is stated that five went to Italy, but more than five can be accounted for in this country. At least two were at Craigie House, and in addition to mine, we know of Fields (Dartmouth), Greene (Wallace, [still untraced when this was written in 1926]), Norton (Harvard), Aldrich (supposedly Harvard, but not located there in 1944), Lowell (P. D. Howe)."⁶⁵ His reference to the Aldrich copy is the only one I have seen, and the Harvard College Library has confirmed that no privately printed *Comedy* owned by Aldrich is in its collection. Aldrich's presentation copy of the published edition (1867) is, however, on Houghton's shelves. The catalog also curiously states that volume 1 was copyrighted on February 9, 1865, but that Wilson was informed that there is no evidence of copyright record for volumes 2 and 3.

It further states that a "good Dante letter," dated May 10, 1866, to Longfellow's friend Mrs. Alexander in Florence is inserted in volume 1, and another to Lowell, dated January 22, 1866, concerning the postponement of a meeting of the Dante Club, was found in volume 2. Wilson also pointed out in a 1930 letter to Harry Dana that volume 3 contains the word "Lowell" written in Longfellow's hand and then crossed out. It is perplexing, however, to find that the Virginia copy has no crossed-out Lowell entry on its pages. Could close friends and constant correspondents Wilson and Dana have connived to substitute Wilson's volume 3 with a clean copy from Craigie House? There is a volume 3, discussed

below, with “James R. Lowell” inscribed and crossed out. If Longfellow hadn’t stated that he had inscribed a certain presentation copy, we would be sure it was the unaccounted set to an English lady he admired a great deal.

Alice Longfellow Thorp, the poet’s granddaughter and agent for the Trustees of the Longfellow House, was given the opportunity to purchase the entire Carroll Wilson collection for the Library of Congress for the sum of \$35,000, or even the Longfellow materials for an adjusted price.⁶⁶ Luther H. Evans, Librarian of Congress, advised Miss Thorp that the Wilson collection “coupled with the many Longfellow books we already have . . . would stand forth as the seminal collection for the study and appreciation of your grandfather’s literary bequest to the world.” She therefore decided not to accept the offer.

In 1950 another distinguished bibliophile, Clifton Waller Barrett, bought the Wilson Collection from Scribner’s and in turn gave all of his books and manuscripts to the University of Virginia Library between 1966 and 1991. A founder of the North Atlantic & Gulf Steamship Company of New York, Barrett retired early and moved to Charlottesville to pursue his keen interest in reading and collecting American literature, which stemmed from undergraduate studies at the university. In his description of the Clifton Waller Barrett Library at Virginia, representing 175 years of American Literature, Herbert Cahoon noted that Barrett had the “good fortune and good judgment to acquire Wilson’s Longfellow materials, which, combined with his own, brought the total to over three hundred letters to important literary figures and sixty-four manuscripts of poetry and prose.”⁶⁷ Wilson’s bookplates accompany Barrett’s in these volumes; the Longfellow letters Wilson referred to are now housed in the library’s manuscript division.⁶⁸ While I have documented the provenance of this *Comedy* at Virginia (PS 2274. D59 1865) passing from Carroll Wilson to Waller Barrett to Virginia, I cannot account for its whereabouts from 1865 to the 1920s, unless, as Wilson wrote in the typescript of his catalog, it came from Italy.

(8) *Brown University*. The most puzzling of all the private issues is the set that dealer David O’Neal may have acquired at auction in 1967 from the estate of Charlotte Eliza Woodbury in Bedford, New Hampshire, and sold to Brown University Library in 1971. This *Divine Comedy* was purchased to honor Christine Hathaway, retiring rare book librarian, who

had assisted Jacob Blank with the Longfellow bibliography for the *Bibliography of American Literature*. Housed in the Hay Harris Rare Book Library, the Brown copy (76 L853d i867b) differs from the others with its contemporary, or near contemporary binding, full pebbled brown-leather (rather than three-quarter red morocco binding of all the others) and considerably more elaborate gold stamping on the spine and covers and inner dentelles. The volumes were originally bound that way, or rebound long before coming to Brown. They bear two bookplates, one of the Brown University Library and the other of Hay Harris Collection of Poetry and Plays. The only evidence of provenance is the number "850" (a number for Italian literature in the Dewey classification) written in the upper right hand corner of each title page, possibly the shelfmark of a previous owner. Also inscribed in volume 1 is "3 vols. / s500 / one of 10 or 12 sets printed / 1st ed." The perplexity of the provenance, more curious than the binding, relates to the question of how one copy of this private edition came into the hands of the Woodbury family, for which there is no known connection to Dante circles, and where it remained for one hundred years (1867–1967).

One explanation might be that, because the Brown copy includes a binder's error at the end of volume 1 of a duplicate of the final gathering of volume 2 (28², p. 217–219), the set might have been discarded, individually bound and made available as a gift for students to present to their retiring school teacher.

The story begins with the unsigned letter in the Brown copy, dated July 19, 1867, to Miss Harriette E. Reed, presenting the Longfellow translation as a gift on her retirement as an assistant secondary school teacher in the Somerville High School from 1860 to 1867.⁶⁹ Longfellow's letters and journal entries give no hint of any friendships with any of the graduates who might have presented the gift or with the Reed family in Cambridge. Her father's death record in 1871 in the Cambridge City Archives records his occupation as shoe salesman; the Bedford New Hampshire Historical society refers to him as Enos Reed, Esq.

"The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Somerville High School—1852–1902" booklet includes a photograph of Harriette Reed and three other teachers, along with information that a letter from "Harriette Reed Woodberry" had been read at the celebration, extending congratulations and regrets for not being able to attend. The celebratory booklet⁷⁰ luckily

disclosed her married name, if incorrectly spelled, and the City of Cambridge Clerk's Office provided the date of her marriage to George E. Woodbury in October 1867. Woodbury was a physician who practiced in Methuen, across the state border from the large Woodbury clan in Bedford, New Hampshire. Harriette and George Woodbury had seven children, two of whom survived. Son David was unmarried and died in 1926, the same year as his mother at the age of eighty-nine in Methuen. Daughter Charlotte Eliza married a half first cousin, Gordon Woodbury, in 1894. They lived in New York City and the family home in Bedford, New Hampshire, and, following Gordon's death in 1924, Charlotte Eliza moved permanently to Bedford. There the Longfellow copy must have remained until her death at ninety-three in 1966 and the auction in 1967. Harriette's great grandchildren could offer no light on the origins of this provenance dating back to July 1867. The auction in 1974 of their uncle George Woodbury's estate in the Bedford house included the sale of the 1867 public printing of the translation for fifteen dollars.

(9) *Two unlocated presentation copies.* We turn our attention to the two presentation copies noted in Longfellow's letters but until now neither identified in the bibliographic history of the translation nor located. Longfellow made a gift of the first edition to Alice Mary Frere in 1867 and to Elizabeth Lawrence in 1872.

The seemingly smitten Longfellow sent two editions of his translation to Alice Mary Frere (1842–1926), a twenty-five-year-old intellectual English woman the poet met during a brief visit to Cambridge with her father in 1867. Longfellow wrote to her in New York on April 4 of that year to say that without having seen the edition himself, he was having sent to her home in Bitten a set just published by Routledge and Sons in London. She replied promptly on April 6 with appreciation—and the news that she was engaged to Major Godfrey Clerk, whom she would marry in July. One presumes disappointment on Longfellow's part, as she was among the several interesting women whose company Longfellow enjoyed after Fanny's death. But once he saw the Routledge edition, he forwarded to her in New York on April 7 the "Boston edition"—so much more beautiful than the English.⁷¹ He wrote again on April 8 to her in New York: "I sent you this morning by Express a copy of the Boston edition the Divine Comedy. Will you accept it as a wedding present? I may not be able to send you any other, and certainly, certainly, I should

not wish to be shut out of that occasion.”⁷² Miss Frere wrote from Clayes St., London, on May 5 that “I don’t think yr. Dante [London edition] has yet appeared here—mine [the private issue] is now on the table.”⁷³ On May 18 Longfellow wrote, “You shall have them all [both private and London editions], either from here or there. I do not like you to have an incorrect copy, got up in haste for the Dante Festival.”⁷⁴ This remark testifies to his insistence that the private issue was a “trial,” at least in retrospect, a draft to be revised before publication. She confided that her Dante would go to Egypt, where her future husband was to be stationed. No further trace of this presentation copy has been found, despite correspondence in the Houghton Library between Mrs. Clerk and Mr. Longfellow until 1874.⁷⁵ My online search of the important Dante collections in British libraries and institutions yielded no signs of Longfellow’s gifts to the future Lady Clerk.⁷⁶ It would be easy to imagine that her set was the one Carroll Wilson purchased from “Shulte,” possibly from Italy, but Longfellow’s letter of April 7 to Ms. Frere, concluding with “Now I will write your name in the Dante, and then say Good Night,” ends such speculation—unless he failed to inscribe her name: there is no inscription in the Virginia set.

No mention either has been made elsewhere of the set Longfellow inscribed to “Elizabeth Lawrence / With kind regards of the translator / July 8 1872.” Mrs. Lawrence was the widow of T. Bigelow Lawrence, who had been U.S. consul-general to Italy at the time of the Dante Festival in Florence in April 1865. In May of that year, an Italian master mason was excavating in Ravenna in connection with the move of Dante’s coffin to a new tomb elsewhere in the city. He came upon the casket containing the bones of Dante, and in writing up this discovery, the mason reports that he gave four fragments of the casket, which had broken off, to the librarian and custodian, Luigi Casamenti.⁷⁷ Three years later Casamenti gave the relics to T. B. Lawrence and, following her husband’s death in 1872, Elizabeth Lawrence brought the fragments back to America. She wrote to Longfellow to see if he would like to have the shards because of their historic relevance to the translation published on the same occasion. In response to Mrs. Lawrence’s gift, Longfellow sent her the privately printed edition, along with several exceedingly grateful letters.⁷⁸ As Longfellow had gone to his summer home in Nahant, Mrs. Lawrence left the coffin shards for him at the Boston Athenaeum, where

Longfellow would retrieve them when he returned to Cambridge in the fall.

Elizabeth Chapman Lawrence was born in 1829 and grew up in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. She married the wealthy son of a blue-blooded New England textile family, became his widow at thirty-nine and spent his fortune “lavishly and intelligently” until her death in 1905.⁷⁹ “E. L.” became the darling of Florence, London, and Washington, entertained dignitaries, and began to appear in writings of prominent people as herself and in fiction, a model for a number of Henry James heroines. She spent several months a year in “Aldie,” an imposing Victorian mansion she built in Doylestown and later willed to her sister, Mary Mercer. It was passed on to Elizabeth’s nephew, William R. Mercer Sr., a prominent sculptor in the Arts and Crafts Movement. She financed the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, a factory for decorative ceramic tiles for another nephew, the noted archeologist Henry Chapman Lawrence, and other impressive buildings, which became part of the Bucks County Historical Museum. Mrs. Lawrence’s Longfellow volumes became part of the collection of English and American literature owned by her grandnephew William Jr. and his wife, Martha Dana Mercer (formerly of Boston). William predeceased his wife, and after Mrs. Mercer’s death, her library was purchased by Brentano’s at the Samuel T. Freeman auction house, Philadelphia, in September 1960 for \$5,553. The Longfellow private edition (lot 896) sold at the lowest price (\$32.50) of any of its sales to date.⁸⁰ Brentano’s top offer for the three volumes had been \$35.00. The Freeman catalog records the following inscription in the set: “Elizabeth Lawrence with kind regards of the translator July 8, 1872”; the set is described as: “4to, 1/2 red morocco, gilt, gold decorated backs, and gilt tops.” In some way Mrs. Lawrence understood there were twelve copies, although no Longfellow letters to her attest to this. “Pray accept my warmest thanks,” she writes, “for the very high compliment you pay me in proposing to send me one of the twelve copies of the *Divina Commedia* which were printed for the Florence celebration.”⁸¹ The archives of Brentano’s, if found, might provide information on subsequent owners.

(10) *Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, Cambridge*. Ironically, the tenth copy was difficult to find, even though it was located right in Craigie House, where Longfellow left it. It hadn’t been seen since Dante scholar J. Chesley Mathews wrote in an article

"Mr. Longfellow's Dante Club" in 1958 that, in addition to Longfellow's copy, there was in Craigie House an "uninscribed set" and a few odd copies of volumes 2 and 3.⁸² An earlier 1912 inventory of Craigie House Library confirms Harry Dana's reference to Longfellow's keeping three copies of the private issue in Craigie House. The inventory values *Inferno* at \$200 each and *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* at \$100 each. To the knowledge of current staff members at the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, the volumes Mathews identified, minus Longfellow's copy deposited at Harvard two years later, were not on the premises. They had not been evacuated with all the books and furnishings to the Charlestown Naval Yard in 1999 for the renovation of Craigie House and, consequently, were not part of the move back to 105 Brattle Street in 2001. Neither were they listed in the Library's card catalog inventory, compiled in 1984–86 by Philip Eppard, currently editor of the *American Archivist*. Nor did William H. Bond, Houghton's curator of manuscripts in the Harvard College Library, recall this set when the Trustees of the Longfellow House offered the Longfellow papers to Harvard. Furthermore, there have been no sightings or records of any disposition by gift or sale since Mathews's account.

The missing volumes were found unexpectedly by Anita Israel, archive specialist for the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, safe and sound in a section of a first-floor room in the Longfellow House reserved for books and furniture that did not go to Charlestown for the three-year renovation beginning in 1999. (Earlier, Harry Dana had moved the poet's manuscripts and books from the ante-room next to Longfellow's study to a sound storage area in the basement for safekeeping during World War II.)⁸³ During her research for a request pertaining to another private Longfellow issue, she came across a box marked "Longfellow Dante, Uncataloged." Inside there were carefully wrapped in tissue paper individual volumes of the "uninscribed" set in three-quarters red morocco and uncut edges. In addition, the box contained the one odd volume of *Purgatorio*, which Mathews had seen, but only one of the two odd volumes of *Paradiso*. In the odd copy of volume 2, Longfellow had written "Odd Volume," and in volume 3, he penned and then crossed out "James R. Lowell, 1868," this possibly being Wilson's original volume. These uncataloged privately printed volumes, had been carefully wrapped in acid-free paper and placed in acid-free boxes in preparation for the evacuation but were stacked instead on the floor in

a first-floor room, encased with a number of other important items that ultimately were not moved. The second odd volume of *Paradiso* mentioned by Mathews is still missing. If the 1912 inventory recording of three sets of the *Comedy* was correct, one might speculate that a still missing copy of *Inferno* (not mentioned in Mathews) and the odd *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* volumes there today might have comprised an eleventh set. But as the marbling on the covers of the other three-volumes sets match each other and these “odd volumes” with different marbling patterns do not, we can assume they are more likely to be considered extra volumes from the printer or publisher than an intended eleventh set.

All ten copies of the privately printed issue identified by Longfellow have now been found and nine of them are happily in accessible locations for study. Antennae are out to find the current location of Longfellow’s presentation copies to Elizabeth Lawrence and to Alice Frere Clerk to complete the history and provenance of this rare first edition.

If there had been no deadline for the first American translation of the *Commedia* to be represented in the Dante sexcentenary celebration, there would have been no need for a private printing, unless as a “trial.” The handsome edition, made in America, no doubt never would have existed. And although he was already consulting with Norton and Lowell on the translation, Longfellow might never have instituted the Dante Club. The study of Dante in America began in earnest with these knowledgeable, dedicated friends and was sped on its way by the first American translation of the great Italian poem. Completing the translation ended Longfellow’s own Dantean journey and initiated pilgrimages for others. This significant achievement in addition helped to elevate the European perception of and esteem for scholarship in this country. The copy of *Inferno* that was rushed to Florence for the Dante celebration made literary history on both sides of the Atlantic.

Appendix

Checklist Locations of the Ten Privately Printed Copies of Longfellow’s translation of the *Divine Comedy* “In Commemorazione del secentesimo Anniversario della Nascita di Dante Alighieri.”

All ten sets include three volumes of the *Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri: *Inferno* printed in 1865, *Purgatorio* in 1866, and *Paradiso* in 1867 by

Ticknor and Fields. The revised public edition was published in 1867. Gilt top, or plain edges. Laid 10" scant × 7". Vol. 1 <i-iv>, <1>–216. Vol. 2 <i-iv>, <1>–219. Vol. 3 <i-iv>, <1>–223. All except the Brown University copy are bound in three-quarters red morocco, marbled paper boards sides, top edges either plain or gilt. Contemporary inscriptions in each of the presentation copies in Longfellow's hand. All copies are in excellent condition.

(1) *Original Presentation Copy Sent to the 600th anniversary of Dante's Birth, at Biblioteca Società Dantesca Italiana, Florence*

Palagio dell'Arte della Lana

Gilt tops

Shelfmark 129 on each spine

Inside cover of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* in Longfellow's hand: "Only 10 copies printed."

Fondo Giuliani Collection

Label on the inside front cover of each volume: Società Dantesca / Italiana / Collezione Dantesca / G. B. / Giuliani / II/ 129 / Dep. Comune di Firenze

(2) *Charles Eliot Norton Presentation Copy, at Harvard University*

Houghton Library

*AC 85 L86o5 865d (A)

Gilt tops

Tipped in manuscript notes, 1876 and 1907, about the history of the set and listing six proposed revisions in volume 1; other suggested changes on flyleaves in volumes 1 and 2. Pasted on flyleaf at beginning of volume 3 is clipping of a poem to H. W. L. on his birthday by James Russell Lowell.

Bookplate on inside front cover of each volume: "From the Library of Charles Eliot Norton / The Gift of his Friends / MDCCCV."

(3) *James Russell Lowell Presentation Copy, at the University of Florida*

George A. Smathers Libraries

Call number: HWL 196 Howe Coll.

Gilt tops; more wear than other copies

Gift of General and Mrs. James A. Van Fleet, 1980–81

Bookplate: The Howe Library / Books and Manuscripts of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow / given by General and Mrs. A. Van Fleet / 1980–1981

(4) *Longfellow Copy, at Harvard University*

Houghton Library

*AC85 L8605 865d (B)

Uncut edges

Bookplate inside front cover: “Henry W. Longfellow”

Also the label: “Harvard College Library / from the Longfellow Collection / at Craigie House / Deposited by the Trustees of the Longfellow House Trust / 1960

Purchased with all other books and mss on deposit in 1976 from Longfellow House Trustees

Penciled on a blank flyleaf opposite title page: “White wrapper enclosed by Longfellow himself/*Inferno*/Original Edition/without notes/only 10 copies printed/for Florence Commemoration”

(5) *George Washington Greene Presentation Copy, at the American Antiquarian Society*

Call number: First Edition; collection being cataloged online

Gilt tops

Longfellow manuscripts in volume 1 listing possible revisions for ten lines in Canto 33, inadvertently identified as 23

Gift of Frank Bemis with funds provided bequest from his will, 1946

(6) *James T. Fields Presentation Copy, at Dartmouth College*

Rauner Special Collections Library: Archives, Manuscripts, Rare Books PQ4315 .L7 1903

Edges uncut and rough; perforated by dots across the top in all three volumes. Manuscript in Fields’s hand in *Inferno*: “Ten copies of this volume were printed in the Spring of 1865 . . . This copy was given to me by Longfellow after a dinner, which he gave at his home in Cambridge completing the translation of the Divine Comedy. This copy is one of ten first printed. J. T. F. 1865.”

Contains the manuscript of the first sonnet Longfellow wrote for the *Comedy*, dated March 29, 1864, “On translating the Divine

Comedy” and also a print of Raphael’s full-length image of Dante.
Gift of Mrs. James T. Fields to Dartmouth College, 1915

(7) *Uninscribed Copy, at the University of Virginia*

Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature
PS 2274 .D59 1865

Uncut edges

Inserted in volume 1 is a letter from Longfellow to his friend Mrs. Alexander, May 10, 1966, and another in volume 2 to J. R. Lowell (letters now in Virginia manuscript collection).

Gift of Clifton Waller Barrett with other volumes between 1966–1991

(8) *Uninscribed Copy, at Brown University*

Hay Harris Rare Book Library
76 L853d i867b

Gilt tops

Duplicate of the last gathering (28) in volume 2

Full brown pebble-leather binding, with very elaborate gilt decoration and dentelles inside, the only copy not with the three-quarters Moroccan binding.

Purchased by Brown University in 1971 in honor of retiring rare collections librarian, Christine Hathaway.

(9) *Unavailable Presentation Copy inscribed to Elizabeth Lawrence*

Gilt tops and uncut edges

Presentation copy to “Elizabeth Lawrence with kind regards of the translator July 8, 1972” in thanks for her gift to him of shards from Dante’s coffin given to her husband, U.S. consul-general in 1868 by a librarian in Ravenna.

Sold at auction at Freeman’s in Philadelphia in 1960, purchased by Brentano’s and not seen since.

(10) *Uninscribed and Uncataloged Copy, at the Longfellow House in Cambridge (Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site)*

Uncut edges; in the best condition of all the sets; virtually unused.

Plus two odd volumes, one of volume 2, in which Longfellow

wrote “Odd Volume” and one of volume 3, in which he wrote and crossed out “James R. Lowell, 1868.”

This copy had been kept by Longfellow in his library in Craigie House (now Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site).

The location of another presentation copy to Alice Mary Frere Clerk has not been located. There is a very slim possibility that her set might have been the one purchased in Italy by the dealer who sold a copy to Carroll A. Wilson. If so, the Frere/Clerk copy would be the one at the University of Virginia.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

NOTES

A longer version of this essay was originally published in the *Harvard Library Bulletin* 16.3 (2005): 5–36.

1. British authors who translated the entire *Commedia*: Henry Boyd (1802); Henry Francis Cary (1814)—Longfellow used Cary in his Harvard classes; Ichabod Charles Wright (1833); Claudia Hamilton Ramsay (1862–1863); C. B. Cayley (1854); John Dayman (1865). Thomas W. Parsons was the first American to begin translating the *Divine Comedy*, in 1843, but he completed only the first seventeen cantos of *Infemo*.

2. Journal, April 30, 1863, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (210), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

3. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, “Longfellow and Dante” (no date), 6. Courtesy National Park Service, Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site.

4. “Mezzo Cammin,” written August 25, 1842, at Marienberg (Boppard) on the Rhine, just before leaving for home. The poem was first published four years after Longfellow’s death in brother Samuel Longfellow’s *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Boston, 1886), vol. 1, 423. The poem parallels the famous beginning of *Infemo*: “Midway upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark, / For the straightforward pathway had been lost” (Longfellow translation). The first stanza of “Mezzo Cammin,” reads as follows: “Half of my life is gone, and I have let / The years slip from me and have not fulfilled/The aspiration of my youth, to build / Some tower of song with lofty parapet.”

5. Dana, “Longfellow and Dante,” 10.

6. Mary Storer Potter, whom Longfellow married in 1831, died in Rotterdam in 1835 during her pregnancy. Longfellow met Frances Appleton at the end of that trip in 1836 but did not win her heart until seven years later.

7. *The North American Review* 50, no. 106 (January 1840): 266. The unsigned review claims the verses in general are “among the most remarkable poetical compositions which have ever appeared in the United States,” specifically admiring Longfellow’s ability “to render him [Dante] with tolerable spirit and fidelity is a work of uncommon talent; but to unite the closest fidelity and the sense and forms of the original, with an easy movement in English verse, is enough to task the best powers of genius” (*North American Review* 50, no. 107 [April 1840]). Longfellow recorded in his journal (March

31, 1857) that *Voices of the Night* had sold 43,550 copies, surpassed at that date only by 50,000 copies of *The Song of Hiawatha*. MS Am 1340 (207).

8. Journal, April 20, 1853, MS Am 1340 (205): "I seem to be quite banished from all literary work, save that of my professorship. The day is so full of business, and people of all kinds coming and going! When shall I have quiet again. And will the old poetic mood come back?"

9. Journal, February 1, 1853, MS Am 1340 (205).

10. Longfellow's Bowdoin classmate Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote from England on May 11, 1855, "No other poet has anything like your vogue," bMS Am 1340.2 (2616). On the day of publication in London, *The Courtship* sold 10,000 copies.

11. Luther Samuel Livingston, *Bibliography of the First Editions in Book Form of the Writings of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Compiled Largely from the Collection Formed by the Late Jacob Chester Chamberlain, with Assistance from Notes and Memoranda* (New York: privately printed, 1908), 61–63.

12. *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, ed. Andrew Hilen (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966–1972). Longfellow to Richard Henry Stoddard, September 8, 1878 (4250): "In the 'Life and letters of Ticknor' (II, p. 479) it is stated that I was engaged upon it 'over five and twenty years.' In Mr. Richardson's 'Primer of American Literature,' p. 55, the time is magnified into more than thirty years."

13. Journal, March 17, 1864, MS Am 1340 (210).

14. *Ibid.*, April 16, 1863. This entry goes on to say, "Meanwhile, the Sudbury Tales [to be renamed *Tales of a Wayside Inn*] are in press." The creative juices returned as he proceeded with Dante.

15. Longfellow to Greene, February 20, 1864, MS Am 1340.1 (2375). I quote further from this letter to illustrate Longfellow's good nature: "Not a line printed, in fact, I have given up that project . . . and when I get started again, which will be when this influenza leaves me, I do not wish to put any of that into the poem." In January 1865 he wrote to Greene, "I take my usual walk with Trap [his dog], who also attended meetings of the Dante Club, who from going so often to the Printing Office, thinks he has translated Dante."

16. Journal, March 24, 1864, BS Am 1340 (210): "Finished Notes of Canto I. Charles Norton came in, and we had a Dantesque talk. He proposes to write a tractate on the 'Portraits of Dante,' to be presented with photographs for next year's celebration of Dante's Six-hundredth birthday. I wish I could hope to get my [whole] translation ready for the same occasion. I am afraid it cannot be done."

17. Livingston collated information on "trials": With the exception of five copies of "Noel" (1864), a Christmas poem accompanying gifts of wine to several friends (Louis Agassiz, George Washington Greene, perhaps Norton, Thomas Gold Appleton, and for his own library), Longfellow's *Comedy* and other private issues were primarily "trials" of works he intended to revise: two copies of the first form of *The New England Tragedies* were privately printed in 1859; two copies printed in 1860, ten copies in a new incarnation (poetry rather than prose) in its second form in 1868, before minor changes were made to text and titles and publicly published later in the year; three copies of *The Hanging of the Crane* in 1874; six copies of "Keramos" in 1877; and two copies of the Bayard Taylor Memorial poem, 1879.

18. Longfellow to Greene January 18, 1865, MS Am 1340.1 (1429).

19. Longfellow to Sumner, February 10, 1865, MS Am 1340 (1435). In the same letter, Longfellow thanks Sumner for his part in effecting "the great event of the century—the antislavery enactment."

20. First Annual Report of the Dante Society (Cambridge: University Press, 1882), May 16, 1883.

21. Sumner to Marsh, "Senate Chamber / 28th Feb. '65 / Dear Mr. Marsh, I send in our despatch bag to you[r] address a copy of Longfellow's translation of the Divina Commedia so far as it has been printed; being the first volume, which he wishes you to offer in his name to the celebration of the six hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dante. I feel sure that you will have pleasure in giving this volume, which in printing and binding, is American, its proper destination." *Vermont Quarterly* 20 (April 1952): 105.

22. Marsh to Longfellow, Turin, May 15, 1865, BMS Am 1340.2 (3750): "I received your favor of April 8 [letter from Longfellow saying that *Inferno* had been sent to him] and I now have the pleasure of enclosing herewith the official acknowledgment of the receipt of the volume presented by you to the Dante Centenario, together with a copy of a letter with which I had accompanied your donations." In his own letter dated May 4 to the committee chair, Signor G. Corsini, Marsh says, "I am persuaded that the Committee will receive this first reproduction of the great poem—a translation most valuable as well for its felicity of expression as for the exactness with which my distinguished compatriot has had the ability to render, in a language so foreign to that of the original, the thought of Dante's sovereign genius—as a contribution most fitting the solemnity of the Centenary, and at the same time as a worthy homage from the New World to one of the chief glories of the country of its discovery." In a postscript, Marsh explains that he realized that he'd spoken about this volume as the only one yet to be published, but as soon as he learned from Longfellow's letter of April 8 that it was not in fact made *di pubblica ragione*, he wrote again to Mr. Corsini in explanation.

23. Henry Clark Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals of Dante Alighieri in Florence and at Ravenna by A Representative* (Florence, 1866), 55–56. Mr. Barlow wrote, "There are 30 Editions of Translations, either of the entire poem, or only part of it. Of these, 4 are in Latin; 1 is in the Milanese dialect; 14 are in French, including a fragment from Ecole des Chartes; 7 are in English, including Longfellow's American Translation, seventeen cantos of the *Inferno* by Parsons, and a fragment from Ferrara; 3 are in German; and 1 in Spanish. It will be ever gratifying to remember how our American brethren stood shoulder to shoulder with us English in this famous Dante muster, helping us to show a better race, the British column being very thin and weak compared with that of the French." Barlow further explains that the French entered the field 200 years before the English. In addition to Longfellow and Parsons, American authors were also represented by Charles Eliot Norton's reputedly poorly researched *On the Original Portraits of Dante*. Professor Achille Magni contributed a sketch of Dante studies in America.

24. Noted Dante bibliographer Theodore W. Koch wrote in *Dante in America*, "Ten copies were printed." Theodore W. Koch, *Dante in America—A Historical and Bibliographical Study* (Boston, 1896), 94. Longfellow's publisher wrote in his presentation copy, "Ten copies of this volume were printed in the Spring of 1865."

25. *Bibliography of American Literature*, comp. Jacob Blanck (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), vol. 5, 501. In the *First Annual Report of the Dante Society*, Norton reported that "10 copies were printed, five of which were sent to Italy," adding fuel to the retrospective controversy about the number sent to Italy, discussed below.

26. Dana, "Longfellow and Dante," 23: Lowell's, Norton's, Fields's, Greene's, Carroll Wilson's, and three copies the poet kept for himself. "That accounts for eight or nine of the privately printed copies in this country. And the one to Italy makes ten." Dana's accounting is incomplete.

27. Journal, May 7, 1864, MS Am 1340 (210). "In translating Dante something must be relinquished. Shall it be the beautiful rhyme, that blossoms all along in lines, like a honeysuckle in a hedge? I fear it must, in order to retain something more precious than rhyme, namely fidelity—truth—the life of the hedge itself."

28. Livingston/Chamberlain was roundly corrected by subsequent bibliophiles when he wrote in *Bibliography of First Editions* that "the text matter in both the private and public editions were printed from the same types" (75). For instance, the Carroll Wilson catalog said the statement was "misleading"; "The text of this private edition was carefully corrected for the published edition" (250).

29. Longfellow's *Additional Notes on the Divine Comedy* were published in the *Fourth Annual Report of the Dante Society*, May 19, 1885 (Cambridge, 1885), 15–31. In his introduction, Norton wrote that "the notes now printed are of interest in the illustration they afford to the range of his reading, and the dwelling of his thought, year after year, upon the 'poema sacro'" (16).

30. *Dante's Inferno*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, ed. Matthew Pearl, with an introduction by Lino Pertile (New York: Modern Library, 2003).

31. "Divine Poem," *The Poet's Dante*, ed. Peter S. Hawkins and Rachel Jacoff (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2001), 231.

32. Longfellow's fastidious records contain the costs of the electroplates for the private issue, if not the recipients. He does itemize presentation copies for the public edition of 1867.

33. Record 12139 of the *Bibliography of American Literature* cites copies at Harvard (2), in Virginia, and at the American Antiquarian Society (AAS). In 2003 WorldCat listed Harvard, Virginia, Dartmouth, Brown, and, erroneously, Wesleyan College in North Carolina, and Bangor Theological Seminary. The latter two copies are the 1867 edition. RLG in 2003 records locations only at Harvard and Brown. The AAS, the Società Dantesca Italiana in Florence, and the recently found unscribed copy do not appear in either of the databases. While book collections in these institutions are currently being converted into machine-readable form, there are no online records now. The copy sent to Italy was found through email exchanges with librarians in Florence, notably Laura Breccia and Gianna Porciatti at the Biblioteca Società Dantesca Italiana.

34. Koch, *Dante in America*, 94.

35. Bibliographer Luther S. Livingston, collectors Parkman Dexter Howe and Carroll Wilson, and Professor J. Chesley Mathews agree that Longfellow's journal and letters clearly indicate that one copy went to Italy. Harry Dana wrote that one or two might have gone to Italy. Newly identified information, discussed below, suggests that a book dealer may have acquired another copy from Italy.

36. Corsini to Longfellow, May 18, 1867, bMS Am 1340.2 (1317). Corsini thanks Longfellow for sending the two volumes as well as for his great kindness.

37. The Dante Society Italiana was founded in 1888, seven years after the Dante Society of America (1881), and twenty-three years after the Deutsche Dante-Gesellschaft (1865).

38. Information about the "carte Giuliani" from the Comune di Firenze Historic Archive reveals that the entire library of Giovan Battista was given to the Comune, destined for the Casa di Dante. Nothing about the "carte Giuliani" appears in the catalogs of the Historic Archive, other Comune libraries, or the Archivio di Stato di Firenze. In 1884, the year the donation was made, his brother and a Conte Ambrogio Lugo made another arrangement by which G. B. Giuliani's papers and other materials remained with the family. Descendants have so far not been located.

39. The medal and its case are in collections storage at the Longfellow National Historic Site rather than on display with other Dante artifacts. The explanation is that they were not on display in 1912, the time frame designated to reproduce his study. The gold medal now on exhibit in the study is one issued by the Prince of Mantua and Montferrat. It was in response to my asking archivist Anita Israel whether she knew the location of the Florentine award that she discovered in the box with this medal new correspondence identifying the Lawrence presentation copy, described below.

40. The beginning of Dante studies in the United States is generally associated with the activities of these three scholars. George Ticknor was the first professor to teach Dante at Harvard as the Abiel Smith Professor of Romance Languages (1817–1835); Longfellow, the second (1836–1854); and James Russell Lowell, the third (1855–1886). Norton, who in 1875 became the first professor of art history in the country to be appointed to a position in fine arts connected with literature, helped develop "Italian 4" into a preeminent course for the study of Dante. Among his many students were bibliographer Theodore W. Koch, Bernard Berenson, George Santayana, and others who became first Dante scholars at various American universities. Dante was a prominent focus throughout the end of the nineteenth century at many levels of society, beyond academia to amateur enthusiasts, literary salons, and ladies' associations.

41. More significant, perhaps, was that the fact that Longfellow did not give the private issue to other friends, particularly those who were Dante scholars. As mentioned earlier, he considered his first translation incomplete and he presented copies of the revised 1867 published edition instead to scholars here and abroad, such as George Ticknor, Dr. W. I. Parsons, Achille Monti, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and later Karl Witte, a German scholar whose own translation of the *Divine Comedy* was also written in 1865.

42. Howells, *Literary Friends*, 182–83, recounts that "Sometimes, and even often, Longfellow yielded to their censure, but for the most part, when he was of another mind, he held to his mind, and the passage had to go as he said."

43. Norton wrote in the *First Annual Report of the Dante Society* (Cambridge, 1886) that "its excellence is admitted by all competent critics" (24).

44. In the introduction to Matthew Pearl's 2003 edition of the Longfellow translation, Professor Lino Pertile wrote (p. xxiii) that Longfellow's notes "form an original and personal commentary that tells us a great deal about Longfellow himself, and not only as a reader of Dante. On the surface, their energy and creativity may seem to contradict the literal submissiveness of the translation. But in fact Longfellow's notes underscore the creative nature of the translator's enterprise, for, as he reaches down to the roots of Dante's meanings, Longfellow finds himself again in touch with the very sources of his own poetry. The result is a unique book in which two great poets, one from fourteenth-century Tuscany, the other from nineteenth-century America, speak to us today with a single strong and moving voice."

45. Letter from Lowell to James B. Thayer, October 1867. Letters of James Russell, ed. Charles Eliot Norton (New York, 1894), 395.

46. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1902), 227.

47. Longfellow wrote in his journal on October 25, 1865, MS Am 1340 (210), that "Lowell, Norton and myself, had the first meeting of our Dante Club. We read the XXV Purgatorio, and then had a little supper. We are to meet every Wednesday at my home." Norton repeats his error of Dante Club dates in the *First Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 21. J. Wesley Matthews estimates in his "The Dante Club" in the *Seventy-Sixth Annual Report*, 37, that fifty-four meetings were held.

48. These personal notes were kindly made available by Howe's son-in-law, Charles A. Rheault Jr.

49. *Parkman D. Howe Library*, part 1, ed. Sidney Ives (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1983), 33. This chapter was reprinted from "Contemporary Collectors XXXVI: New England Authors," *The Book Collector* (Winter 1963).

50. *Parkman D. Howe Library*, ed. Sidney Ives, part 3, "A Description of the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Collection," ed. David L. O'Neal and Mary T. O'Neal (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1986), 44. The catalog erroneously records the presentation date of *Inferno* to Lowell as February 17, rather than, as Longfellow wrote, February 27.

51. The Howe Society was founded in 1980 to commemorate the acquisition by the University of Florida of the Parkman Dexter Howe collection.

52. At the time of the deposit and sale, the National Park Service, which administers the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, did not have the capability of over-seeing archives and making them accessible to scholars. That policy changed in 1972, well after the Longfellow materials were deposited at Harvard. The National Park Service did not begin to administer and process archival material until 1991.

53. Another coincidence is that General George Washington, having taken over the Tory mansion of the Vassal family, commanded the revolutionary forces from the ground-floor room that was later Longfellow's study.

54. Longfellow also sent money regularly to Greene, who was often in financial straits, helped publish Greene's writings, and tried to secure positions for him. Greene always dozed off at Dante Club meetings. One wonders why Longfellow was such a good friend to Greene, who seems to have been neither interesting nor likeable and who took advantage of the poet's good nature. Their shared Italian experience explains the basic attraction; in addition Andrew Hilén thinks Longfellow thought of Greene subconsciously as his alter ego, as what Longfellow might have been if fortune had been less kind. Hilén, *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 5:8.

55. *Illustrated Catalogue of the Literary Treasures of Walter Thomas Wallace, March 22nd, 24th, and 25th, 1920* (New York City: American Art Association, 1920), lot 862.

56. The AAS has Foley's receipt from Wallace sale; he may have acted as agent for Bemis.

57. *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 45, no. 1 (1935).

58. *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 56, no. 2 (1946): 198–200. "The most spectacular increase in our American literature collection came at the completion of the Bemis trust," wrote director Clarence S. Brigham.

59. In Ticknor and Fields, Records: Guide (bMS Am 2100), Houghton Library, a "Historical Note" explains: Ticknor and Fields was established in 1832 as Allen and Ticknor. James T. Fields

entered as a junior partner in 1843 and became its "literary" editor. In 1868 Ticknor and Fields became Fields, Osgood and Co. and later Houghton and Osgood [and bought the Ticknor and Fields list]. This company became Houghton, Mifflin and Co. in 1880 and continued to publish Longfellow well into the next century at the Riverside Press, where Oscar Houghton had been the principal partner and guiding light. The archive of the Houghton Mifflin Company (as it was renamed in 1908), including papers of its predecessors, was given to the Houghton (no relation) Library in 1991.

60. The poem continues: "Far off the noises of the world retreat; / The loud vociferations of the street/Become an undistinguishable roar. / So, as I enter here from day to day, / and leave my burden at this minster gate, / Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray, / The tumult of the time disconsolate / To inarticulate murmurs dies away, / While the eternal ages watch and wait."

61. Longfellow inscribed a set of the published edition of 1867 to her. Annie Fields received a letter from Sarah Orne Jewett written on Longfellow's death: "His work stands like a great cathedral in which the world may worship and be taught to pray, long after its tired architect goes home to rest." *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett*, ed. Annie Fields (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911).

62. Carroll A. Wilson, "American Literature, Part IV, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807–1882," typescript of Wilson's catalog of his collection, sent to H. W. L. Dana, Esq. "With the affection and compliments of Carroll A. Wilson, June 26, 1932." Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

63. In the typescript of Parkman Howe's own catalog he calls attention to Wilson's comment on his privately printed edition having come from Italy: "C. A. Wilson—purchased in Italy. Bought by Shulte and sold privately." I have not been able to identify Shulte.

64. In a letter to H. W. L. Dana, April 9, 1948, Phio C. Calhoun, lawyer for the Wilson estate, writes that the entire Wilson library, with few exceptions, has been sold to Scribner's. He also says that "Mr. Wilson always planned to retype the whole thing and bring it up to date, but as far as I know, he never got at it and the executors made only one entirely complete catalogue which was partially complete . . . There is to be a printed catalogue . . . As I understand it, however, the book will contain all material information omitting only some narrative details of Mr. Wilson's research."

65. Carroll A. Wilson, *Thirteen Author Collections of the Nineteenth Century*, and *Five Centuries of Familiar Quotations*, ed. Jean C. S. Wilson and David A. Randall (New York: privately printed for Scribner's Sons, 1950), vol. 1, 250–51.

66. Luther H. Evans to Alice Longfellow Thorp, June 14, 1948,

67. Herbert Cahoon, *A Brief Account of the Clifton Waller Barrett Library* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1960), 23.

68. Both letters, like the private issue of the *Comedy*, are in Special Collections of the University of Virginia Library: Letter to Mrs. Alexander (*MSS6aai), May 10, 1866, and to Lowell (MSS2ar), January 22, 1866. After Harvard, the University of Virginia may have the largest collection of Longfellow's papers.

69. MS 54.21, Brown University Library. "Somerville July 19th 1867 Miss Reed [no punctuation] Will you please accept the accompanying set of Longfellow's translation of Dante from the graduates of the High School which you are about to leave? We present them to you as a token of our appreciation of you, both as a lady and a friend, and as a reminder to you (if any is needed) of the many pleasant hours we have passed as your pupils. On severing you[r] connection with the school to enter upon new duties the graduates tender to you their best wishes, and as the years roll round separating us still further from our school days, may our remembrances of those past times make us better able to perform the duties of the present."

70. This publication was made available by Noreen F. Santucci, historian, Somerville High School, February 6, 2004.

71. Longfellow to Frere, April 7, 1867, MS Am 1340.1 (1608): "Since writing you last (this shows I have already written twice), I have received from London the proof sheet of Dante, and am sorry to see that the edition is not a handsome one, but rather of the cheap kind, which is a great pity. Now it is absolutely necessary to my peace of mind that you should have the more beautiful. Therefore I lay this burden upon you. This edition is not complete; it has not received the last corrections[;] it is without Notes and is, always will be unpublished, as only ten copies were printed."

72. Longfellow to Frere, April 8, 1867, MS Am 1340.1 (1609).
73. Frere to Longfellow, May 5, 1867 bMS Am 1340.2 (1190).
74. Longfellow to Frere, May 18, 1867, MS Am 1340.1 (1615).
75. During her husband's postings in the Middle East and in India, Mrs. Clerk, later Lady Clerk, learned the Arabic language and wrote two books under her maiden name, Alice Mary Frere, including a translation with annotations of Muhammad Diyab Itidr's *I'lām-en-nās: Historical Tales and Anecdotes of the Time of the Early Khalifas* (London, 1873). Of this work, Longfellow wrote to her on May 5, 1874: "They are a fit sequel to the 'Arabian Nights.' I envy you your knowledge of Arabia" (MS Am 1340.1 (2101)).
76. I happily thank Amanda Robertson at the London Library for her kind help in searching for the privately printed edition in prominent Dante collections in university libraries in England and Scotland, and also directing me to the obituaries in the London *Times* for her husband, Sir Godfrey Clerk, 1908, and her diplomat son, Sir George Clerk, 1951.
77. Pamphlet on Ravenna, "Relazione Storica sulla Avventurosa Scoperta delle Ossa di Dante Alighieri compilata da Primo Uccellini" (Ravenna, 1865).
78. Longfellow to Elizabeth Chapman Lawrence, July 20, 1872, Nahant, Massachusetts: "It gives me great pleasure to know that I have given you pleasure by sending the Dante volumes; but your pleasure cannot be half so great as that you have given me by the very precious Dante relic. . . . I shall always keep it and guard it with reverential care." This letter is reproduced in Andrew Hilen's published letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (3173), where it is cited as "unrecovered," but the manuscript is in the collections of the Boston Athenaeum (MSS B1.25). This Longfellow letter was given to the Athenaeum by Martha Dana Mercer, wife of Mrs. Lawrence's nephew, William Mercer. Mrs. Mercer was from a prominent wealthy Brahmin family and continued her ties with Boston.
79. E. L. *The Bread Box Papers*—a biography by Helen Hartman Gemmill and introduction by James A. Michener (Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Dorrance; Doylestown, Pa.: Bucks County Historical Society, 1983), i. This book traces the life of the daughter of a small-town judge, who through marriage becomes a wealthy world traveler and influential person. At a house party after "Aldie" was built, guests, including Martin Brimmer, president of the fledgling Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, talked about the possibility of a new building in Copley Square, partly to house Mrs. Lawrence's husband's armor collection. She made a contribution of \$25,000 to be matched by \$75,000 by others. Hers was the largest contribution. The second largest was made by Thomas Gold Appleton, Longfellow's brother-in-law, also a guest at that party and occasional guest at meetings of the Dante Club. Thanks are due Cynthia Earman of the Bucks County Historical Society for directing me to sources on the Mercers and Mrs. Lawrence.
80. Samuel T. Freeman Auction Catalog of the "Library of Rare and Valuable Books in Fine Bindings" from the estate of the late Martha Dana Mercer and others, Friday, September 14–16, 1960, Philadelphia.
81. This is one of three original letters to Longfellow found by the archivist at the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site in the storage box containing the Florence medal presented to Longfellow in 1869.
82. J. Chesley Mathews, "Mr. Longfellow's Dante Club," *Seventy-Sixth Annual Report of the Dante Society* 1958 (Boston: The Dante Society of America, Care of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences), 32. In the last published listing of private-edition locations before the author's, Mathews wrote that "one went to Italy." The Fields set is in the Dartmouth College Library; Greene's is at the American Antiquarian Society; Norton's at Harvard, Lowell's in the Parkman Howe collection [now at Florida]. In addition, one is owned by C. Waller Barrett [now at Virginia]; the Norton set is in the Harvard College Library [Houghton]; Longfellow's set with his book label is at Craigie House [now at Harvard]. As noted above, he also saw an "uninscribed set" and an extra, or odd copy of volume II and a set of unbound sheets for volume II and two extra or odd copies of volume III. He goes on to say that "Unless more than ten copies were printed, there are left unaccounted for only two copies of volume I, and one copy of volume II and of volume III." Not

knowing about the Frere and Lawrence presentation copies, his "unaccounted for" figures were understandably off.

83. An unidentified Boston newspaper ran a photograph of Harry Dana at a desk in the "bunker" with a headline: Bomb shelter at the Longfellow House. An article on April 1, 1942, in *The Christian Science Monitor* confirmed the precautionary exercise.

European Influences and American Identity in Longfellow's Dantism

IGOR CANDIDO

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow died in March 1882. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who had attended his friend's funeral in Cambridge, died just one month later in Concord. The passing of the two literary figures would come to epitomize a sudden decline of the unprecedented flourishing of nineteenth-century New England literature. On May 16 of that year, during the meeting of the newborn Dante Society at Mr. John Woodbury's house at 17 Kirkland Street, Charles Eliot Norton read, in memory of the Society's first president, a paper on Mr. Longfellow's connections with the study of Dante.¹ With the departure of Longfellow and Emerson, American Dante studies and, more generally, contemporary American culture found themselves on the verge of a radical transformation.

When the so-called American Renaissance, as F. O. Matthiessen aptly defined the quinquennium 1850–1855,² first emerged, Emerson, who at the time had written two volumes of *Essays* (1841 and 1844) and *Representative Men* (1850), could already be considered the prophet of a new era of the American unclassic classicism to come. But history, and still more the history of criticism, are often fatally slow to acknowledge the authentic value of contemporary classics. As Marcus Cunliffe observes,

In the decade or so after the Civil War, few would have mentioned Melville and Whitman, if they had been asked to list the chief living American authors. They would certainly have named Emerson, and perhaps the Quaker poet, John G. Whittier, both Massachusetts men. But pride of place would probably have been given to the writers associated not merely with Massachusetts in general, but with

Boston (and Harvard, at nearby Cambridge) in particular. Their reputations, in their own day, were prodigious: a poem like Longfellow's 'Psalm of Life' was familiar equally to Baudelaire (as his sonnet 'Le Guignon' shows), and to a British soldier in the Crimea, heard to repeat one of its lines as he lay dying before Sebastopol.³

But only thirty years earlier, Emerson's intellectual exordium, *Nature* (1836), and several years later Longfellow's first collection of poems, *Voices of the Night* (1839), had found America still in search of its own cultural identity. At the same time, the second of Emerson's ground-breaking pamphlets, *The American Scholar* (1837), which Oliver Wendell Holmes did not hesitate to nickname the American "intellectual Declaration of Independence,"⁴ outlined the ideal program of a cultural renewal that would have emancipated the American men of letters from the encumbering influence of European muses. One day the emergence of Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Melville—representatives of the other American Renaissance—would further prove that Emerson's historical and aesthetic insights were far from being challenged.

In Emerson's view, the 1837 manifesto did not in fact aim to break any connection to Old World traditions, as his grand tour of 1832 and his cultural background clearly demonstrate; rather, the manifesto sought to discover and found a new and thoroughly Western and originally American speculative and literary tradition. Whatever Emerson's intention, however, Longfellow and other Boston Brahmins seemed to be aristocratically deaf to the voice of the Emersonian *planctus* on the status of modern literature in the United States. In hindsight, they came to represent true antitypes of the great American Renaissance authors. As Marcus Cunliffe notes, "These Brahmins were born with silver spoons protruding from infant mouths, went to Harvard (or taught at it, usually both), had a distaste for democracy and the frontier, and for contemporary problems; they turned to Europe and the past for comfort, and failed to understand their own age or their own country; they were too refined." So the charge runs, as leveled at the Brahmins by the "Jeffersonian" literary historian Vernon Louis Parrington. "Why"—Cunliffe queries—"have other scholars continued to hold New England's nineteenth-century library establishment in fairly low esteem? The very idea of Brahminism has something to do with it. . . . To non-Bostonian Americans, the Brahmins have seemed both snobbish and parochial, too pleased with themselves

and too eager to minister metaphorically to the Court of St James." He nevertheless concludes that "any simple version of the fastidious and un-American Brahmins is wrong."⁵ As a matter of fact, the influential and long-lasting negative attitude toward the Brahmins has often led critics to consider Longfellow's acceptance of European literary models as too passive, if not servile, the accusation of Brahminism foreshadowing not only the poet's excessive inclination toward European muses but also his complete obliviousness of American contemporary history and literature. In Parrington's view, Longfellow's lifelong work on the most important of his European models, Dante Alighieri, can exemplify the typical attitude of a Harvard Brahmin:

The winds of doctrine and policy might rage through the land, but they did not rattle the windows of his study to disturb his quiet poring over Dante. The translation of the *Divina Commedia* would go forward even while the country was being torn asunder. In a sense such work was his refuge from the storm and stress of malignant forces that troubled him. He did not like the tumult and the shouting, and much of Longfellow is compressed into the sonnets that preface the translation, much of the gentleness of his evasion, and much of the finer craftsmanship of his later years.

Of have I seen at some cathedral door
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate,
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

How strange the sculptures that adorn these towers!
This crowd of statues, in whose folded sleeves
Birds build their nests; while canopied with leaves
Parvis and portal bloom like trellised bowers,
And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers!
But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled eaves

Watch the dead Christ between the living thieves,
And underneath, the traitor Judas lowers!
Ah! From what agonies of heart and brain,
What exultations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This medieval miracle of song!⁶

Longfellow's attempts to revive Dante's Middle Ages and introduce it into the New World's society, are reflected in what Ernst Robert Curtius wrote in his thought-provoking essay "The Medieval Bases of Western Thought" (1950):

The American conquest of the Middle Ages has something of that romantic glamour and of that deep sentimental urge which we might expect in a man who should set out to find his lost mother. If the story of the American conquest of the Middle Ages were told, it would have to dwell on the study and the cult of Dante which flowered in New England and which is again flourishing in T. S. Eliot. To the mind of the Bostonians in the 1880's, Dante was not merely one of the world's greatest poets. They were of the opinion, as Van Wyck Brooks has it, that the world had been going to the dogs ever since the time of Dante. Dante, to them, appeared as the perfect expression of a perfect state of society. It was a romantic vision of the same kind as that which set the German romantic poets of 1800 dreaming about the ideal Middle Ages.⁷

Dante could offer refuge to this quiet "poet of the library" not only from the storm of history's hostility but also from the more dangerous threat of depression after the death of his beloved second wife in 1861.⁸ As with other translators such as Emerson and Thomas William Parsons before him, the labor of translating Dante was to provide his only consolation during the period 1861 to 1863 after such a painful loss. The common portrait of Longfellow as being too composed and lacking in sensitivity does not do justice to the spirit of humanity evident in his most successful art, born of the inner attraction of the so-called "power of blackness" of the American mind.⁹ As the first sonnet above depicts, the poet himself aims at alleviating his existential burden for a while. If his poetry never dramatizes the suffering that leads to this quiet moment of a Dantean suspension in limbo, it is, in the end, nothing but the aesthetically sublimated result of the path itself that was taken and left behind. While reading Longfellow's sonnet through a biographical lens is possible,

it may also be understood in light of the historical process of his introducing Dante's medieval mind into the New World or even assimilating it to the modern mind, as Emerson tried to do by dreaming of a newborn American Dante.¹⁰ But if Longfellow remained removed from such utopias, in the broad realm of American Dante studies he is to be acknowledged, as Parrington recognizes, as the man who "marked the transition from the nebulous ferment of creative renaissance to the scholarly culture of Brahmin Cambridge."¹¹ Indeed, from 1829, when Longfellow assumed the professorship of modern languages at Bowdoin College, to 1854, when he resigned from Harvard, and up through 1867 with the translation and commentary of the *Divine Comedy*, the rhythm of his intellectual life followed a regular alternation between poetry and scholarship. "It is to be noted"—Theodore W. Koch wrote—"that as when in the creative mood Longfellow translated but little or nothing, so when devoting himself to Dante he held his powers of original composition in abeyance."¹² Longfellow's participation in both the artistic and intellectual movements shaping mid-nineteenth-century American culture reveals the insufficiency of interpreting his Dante in exclusively academic terms since doing so fails to explain the very transition from creativity to scholarship at the origin of Dante's fortune in twentieth-century America.

A few preliminary considerations can help contextualize both Longfellow's academic and creative Dantism. In the first half of nineteenth century, among the intellectual operations underway in New England legitimated by the desire of assimilating European heritage, that of exploring national literatures, is the Romantic path that both Emerson and Longfellow chose to take as early as did George Ticknor, the founder of the Harvard tradition of modern languages and pioneer of teaching Dante in the American academy. But Longfellow and Emerson, unlike Ticknor, were able to ground their mutual interests in *Weltliteratur* in the broad social context of assimilation and divulgation. From the perspective of Emerson's aesthetic and Longfellow's historical views, Dante's oeuvre and its heritage—as well as all Italian literature read in the context of European literary tradition—contributed to the construction of an American cultural identity. Methodologically speaking, however, the works of both writers must be viewed in different ways. It is true, on the one hand, that although Longfellow's Dante library was far richer than Emerson's, both could share many of the most relevant primary and secondary sources at their disposal. On the other hand, it must be admitted that their methods

of reading and interpreting Dante differed in many respects, their premises and hence their results being almost programmatically opposite.¹³ Longfellow devoted all his intellectual strengths to “elucidating” (to use Eliot’s word) the literal meaning and the historical context of Dante’s poetry; Emerson, to accounting for its multiple senses and assimilating it to his own aesthetic doctrine. As the two methods reflected different approaches to reading Dante’s *Comedy*, so they defined the two main currents of American Dantism. Longfellow must be acknowledged not only as the first American translator of the entire *Comedy* but also as the first American historian of Dante and of his poem’s influence on Italian language and literature. Emerson merits recognition as the first to have assimilated Dante’s world to modern American thought, opening the way to the infinite variations of his text’s transmission and reception. While “the Brahmin mind found a more congenial field for its literary ambitions in history,”¹⁴ Emerson proclaimed, with Thomas Carlyle’s “Thoughts on History” (1830), that “all history becomes subjective; in other words, there is properly no history; only biography” (“History”), and later that “no facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no Past at my back” (“Circles”).¹⁵

With the first lectures on Dante given at Bowdoin College upon his arrival in 1829, Longfellow began his career as a Dantist and as a historian of Italian language and literature with a long article entitled “History of Italian Language and Dialects,” published in 1832 in the *North American Review* and partially reprinted in *Poets and Poetry of Europe* (1845). On the very first page we read a profession of unshakable intellectual faith:

We hold the study of languages, philosophically pursued, to be one of the most important which can occupy the human mind. And we are borne out in this position by the reflection, that the elements of language lie deep among the elements of thought:—that the one follows the various fluctuations of the other; and that the language of a nation is the external symbol of its character and its mind.¹⁶

The inextricable bond that ties language and philosophy foreshadows the one between poetry and philosophy that characterized the most significant passages of Italian literature from the verses of Dante’s “il padre / mio e degli altri miei miglior [*sic*], / che mai rime d’amore usar dolci e leggiadre” (*Purg.* 26.97–99), Guido Guinizelli, the father of the *stilnovo*, “to whom by acclamation is given the honor of being the first among the

Italian poets, who embodied in verse the subtleties of philosophy, and gave terseness, force and elevation to poetic style.”¹⁷ But it was only with Dante’s poetry that philosophical use of language reached its peak since Dante himself was the first to write a study on the nature of vernacular language that paid attention to poetry, grammar, and philosophy, namely the *De vulgari eloquentia*, which Longfellow could read while it was still unknown in America and rely on for his historical study of Italian dialects.¹⁸

As early as 1832, the desire to account for Dante’s thought and poetics as embodied in and conveyed by his perfect language must have impelled an intellectual and teacher like Longfellow to undertake his comprehensive study of the poet’s works.¹⁹ His interest in Dante’s language seems to be confirmed soon after, when, drawing on Giambattista Vico’s *Scienza nuova*, Longfellow describes Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio as “primitive” poets, “giants of an early age, when gigantic strength was wanted to fix the uncertain foundations of the national language and literature broad, deep and massive.”²⁰ But even more revealing of Longfellow’s position concerning Dante’s philosophical language is his reference to Melchiorre Cesarotti’s *Essay on the Philosophy of Language* (1800): “The genius of Dante was not the slave of his native idiom. His zeal was rather rational than simply patriotic. The creator of a philosophic language, he sacrifices all conventional elegance to expressiveness and force; and far from flattering a particular dialect, lords it over the whole language, which he seems at times to rule with despotic sway.”²¹ By relying on the same sources, Emerson too would later entertain the idea of a Dante prophet belonging to a savage but uncorrupted primitive age when language was still closely allied with nature, as many pages of his journals and works show. He expresses the same thought in two particularly enigmatic verses of the poem *Solution* (1867): “Dante searched the triple spheres / moulding nature at his will.”²² The somewhat obscure image alludes to the affinity between the method of nature and that of poetry within Emerson’s transcendental doctrine of beauty, as clarified by the famous syllogism opening the fourth chapter of *Nature, Language*: “Language is a third use which Nature subserves to man. Nature is the vehicle of thought, and in a simple, double, and threefold degree. Words are signs of natural facts.”²³ Here, as Matthiessen pointed out, Emerson instinctively inclined toward the point that he reached in *Poetry and Imagination*, telling of the functions he attributed to Dantean art: “The poet accounts all productions

and changes of Nature as the nouns of language, uses them representatively, too well pleased with their ulterior to value much their primary meaning.”²⁴ The Emersonian perspective on language does not differ from Longfellow’s and helps shed new light on the latter’s twofold discovery of Dante’s philosophical poetry and philosophy of language within the historical context that witnessed the dialectic effort to assimilate European literary heritage and simultaneously venture along new paths opened by late romanticism on American soil. We shall see how this very dialectic, though finally put to rest between 1861 and 1867 when Longfellow completed his translation of Dante’s poem and composed his accompanying six sonnets, is otherwise always at work in both Longfellow the poet and Longfellow the scholar.

Near the end of 1837, Longfellow projected a series of lectures on Dante to be held at Harvard College, where he had been appointed professor of modern languages just one year earlier. A letter to his father dated February 8, 1838 bears witness to his initiative of reviving—in Cambridge—the *Lecturae Dantis* inaugurated by Boccaccio in Florence at the end of the trecento:

All my time, save for recreation, is taken up with lectures. I am now upon Dante, as you know, unwritten lectures: but I have petitioned the Corporation for the use of the chapel next summer for a course of written public lectures. By public I mean free to any and every one who chooses to attend, whether in college or out of college. What the gentlemen of the Corporation will think of such a plan, I know not yet, but shall know soon. In the meantime, I am preparing; and devote the whole day to it.²⁵

But the project was never approved and of the entire series the Houghton Library catalog lists three manuscript lectures that were probably ready at the time Longfellow had to abandon the idea of lecturing publicly on Dante and his poem. These lectures are entitled and dated as follows: “Life of Dante (Jan. 15, 1838 or March 11, 1840?)”; “Analysis of ‘Purgatorio’ (March 22, 1838)”; and “Lecture on ‘Divina Commedia’ (May 22, 1838 midnight).”²⁶ Also in 1838 Longfellow wrote his first and only essay entirely devoted to Dante, a contribution that would not appear prior to the 1857 edition of his complete prose works. In this essay, which mainly draws on the first Harvard lecture, Dante’s life is divided into three epochs—early youth, political life, and exile. The scant notes on the presence, function, and meaning of allegory in the poem heavily depend on

the third lecture. Clearly the connections among the papers written in 1838 are attributable to Longfellow's method of teaching and interpreting Dante, to which we shall now turn our attention. In order to do so, however, we must first consider Longfellow's idea of history.

At the beginning of the first lecture, "Life of Dante,"²⁷ Longfellow states his unwillingness to examine most vexed questions, such as whether Dante knew Greek; whether he authored the *Divine Comedy*; whether Beatrice was a living woman or merely a child of the poet's fancy; whether he or Antonio del Beccaio translated the Seven Penitential Psalms; whether his wife Gemma Donati made his life as wretched as Boccaccio tells us; and so on. What follows is far more interesting to us as it is the first argument, drawn *e contrario*, he makes in favor of the historical method of interpreting Dante's poem in the context of the age in which it was written, a method that Longfellow would henceforth consider his own:

Let me rather, as I said sketch out such traits and figures, as may serve to represent to you the Age of Dante for it is of great importance to us in looking back upon any epoch in History, to give it a real existence in our minds, that it may be present to us—not past—that we may seem for the moment to live in it. This is difficult.²⁸

On closer analysis, such a definite methodological position differs little from that which Charles S. Singleton, the twentieth-century's most influential American interpreter of Dante, will take in defining the necessity for the critic to reappropriate the mentality of the medieval world in order to avoid imposing upon medieval matters our modern approaches and problems.²⁹ But it is nevertheless true that Longfellow's reading of Dante was far different from Singleton's on another key question: the poet's use of allegory in the divine poem.

There is indeed another element that more profoundly characterized Longfellow's method as a Dantist and it is anticipated in the short prefatory note to the second lecture, "Analysis of Purgatorio": "In this analysis I consider the work as a Poem only. No attempt is made to explain the Allegory."³⁰ His predilection for literalness over allegory is a choice consciously made in these early years of teaching, one so explicit and unshakeable that it would allow his future hermeneutics to revolve around the two poles of Romantic literary doctrine only, that is, history

and aesthetics. In the third and most interesting lecture of the three, "Lecture on 'Divina Commedia,'" Longfellow reiterates his profession of intellectual faith in reading the poem uniquely as a poetic masterpiece, thereby undervaluing the presence and function of allegory within it. These pages are worthy of being quoted at length:

I have been somewhat in doubt how I should present the subject of the *Divina Commedia* to you. At first I prepared an analysis of one division of it, which I wrote out fully. But when I looked anew what I had done, I was conditioned to lay it aside. It seemed motionless, lifeless, all ashes. The spirit of the great Italian seemed to say to me, like Lear, "you do me wrong to take me out of my grave."

I have therefore abandoned this plan; and after briefly recalling to your minds the narrative part of this poem, shall confine myself chiefly to pointing out such things as are most worthy of your regard in the work. I shall look upon it as a poem only. I consider its allegory rather as a blemish than a beauty, nor are the theological discussions of any particular interest to me, except so far as they exhibit Dante's great power of grasping subtle thoughts and expressing them at once distinctly and forcibly in a most poetic diction.

Most of the Italian commentators upon Dante make the Allegory of his poem the prominent feature in it. They are looking everywhere for hidden meanings; and as the Old Christian Fathers gave to the Bible a literal and a spiritual sense, so do they give a double interpretation to the whole Divine Poem. For my part, I cannot bring myself to look upon this work as a sustained and simple Allegory. It begins, indeed, with a figurative and allegorical passage, and many such are scattered everywhere through the whole poem: and in one or two instances occupy an entire canto. But if anyone expects to find in it a continued Allegory from beginning to end, as in *The Fairy Queen* and *the Pilgrim's Progress*, he will be much disappointed. The wild genius of Dante subjected himself to no such bondage. He had higher aims than to play with similitudes and preserve unbroken the unity of a fable.

The poem then is not what we understand by an Allegorical poem, in the strict sense of the novel; in the same sense, for instance, as Reinecke Fuchs. And yet it is full of Allegory; full of literal and figurative meanings; full of symbols and things signified. Dante himself says in a letter which he sent with the Poem to his friend Can Grande della Scala: "It is to be remarked, that the sense of this work is not simple; but on the contrary one may say manifold. For the first sense is that which it derives from its language; and another is that which it derives from the things signified by the language; the one is literal, the other, allegorical. The subject of the whole work, taken literally, is the condition of the soul after the death. But if you well observe the express words, you will easily perceive, that, in an allegorical sense, the poet is treating of this Hell, in which, journeying onward like travellers, we may deserve reward or punishment."

The machinery, then, of the poem is allegorical; but the characters introduced are real personages, in their true forms. Among these some masks and disguises

are introduced: the age; the church; the empire of Rome; the virtues, shining as stars; and so forth. Properly speaking, the poem is a mixture of realities and symbols, as best suits the author's feeling at the moment.

We are to consider the Divine poem, then, as the mirror of the Age in which its author lived; or rather, perhaps, as a mirror of Italy in that Age. The principal historic events and personages, the character and learning of the time, are faithfully imaged and reproduced therein. This is one of its most striking characteristics. It is a good lesson for every author to behold how manfully Dante labored in and upon the Present. Most of the events imagined had just transpired; most of the persons were just dead; the memories of both were still warm in the minds of men. The poet did not merely imagine, as a possibility; but felt, as a reality.³¹

Longfellow's consideration of allegory rather as a blemish than a beauty together with his limited interest in theological issues anticipated the Crocean aesthetic doctrine that seeks to distinguish what is poetic in the poem from what is not poetic. Therefore, we could legitimately level at Longfellow the same charge of failure to understand the true nature of the *Commedia's* allegory with which Singleton indicted Croce, a critic whose sense of aesthetics likewise showed a radical unwillingness to admit that allegory could be an integral part of Dante's poetry.³² We do know, nevertheless, that such an attempt to distinguish between poetry and doctrine was part of the inheritance of German romanticism in particular and which survived in two major Italian critics influenced by German idealism, Francesco De Sanctis and Benedetto Croce. We could also return to the eighteenth-century habit of English readers of Dante who used to extract single episodes or cantos from the narrative continuum of the whole poem, particularly of the first canticle. The fact remains, however, that Longfellow's focus on the historical study of Dante's life as well as on the literal explanation of his poem amounted to a new and thoroughly American approach to the matter, although post-Singleton readers may no longer be capable of recognizing it as such. Indeed, as Zygmunt Barański observes, American critics who declined to follow Singleton and employ an allegorically-based perspective were marginalized and ignored: they were seen as European Dantists rather than as American Dantists.³³

Longfellow's 1838 essay on Dante, which, we have seen, heavily depends on the lectures, offers still more interesting evidence of the American identity of Longfellow's Dantism. Within the text, the cursory allusion to the powerful influence exercised on Dante by his philosophic studies is made to serve the essay's biographical purpose, so that Longfellow's previous interest in Dante's language, which dictated the philosophical notes interspersed in the 1832 article "History of the Italian Language

and Dialects,” could not be more alien to the present intent. But affinities as well as differences must be taken into consideration. In the later work as well, it is possible to spy on the poet sitting at his desk even while seemingly intent on listening to the scholar who studies Dante. If, according to the 1832 article, Guinizelli had embodied in verse the subtleties of philosophy, Guido Cavalcanti, Dante’s bosom friend, was now considered “no mean poet” since “he loves the dreams of philosophy better than the dreams of poetry.”³⁴ Such a definition of the second Guido as a philosopher of radical atheism depends on Dante’s tacit condemnation of his heretical attitudes in *Inferno* 10; in terms of poetics, this same definition cannot but suggest the neat separation between poetry and philosophy according to the very notion of poetry Longfellow entertained as early as 1838.³⁵ It is only the poet’s task to interpret universal poetry through the instruments proper to his own art, as Longfellow let his audience clearly understand in the very conclusion of his third lecture, where he overtly points out the limit of any other reader’s interpretation: “In every poem there are things which only a poet can rightly understand.”³⁶

It cannot be a coincidence that between 1838 and 1839 Dante made his first appearances in Longfellow’s poems and fictions as well. In *Hyperion* we find explicit references to the episodes of Piccarda, Cunizza, and Rahab (*Par.* 3.121 ff. and 9.13 ff.), and to the river Lethe in the Earthly Paradise (*Purg.* 28.31 ff.); in *Voices of the Night*, the first translations from the *Purgatorio: The Celestial Pilot* (*Purg.* 2.13 ff.), *The Terrestrial Paradise* (28.1 ff.), and *Beatrice* (30.13 ff. and 85 ff.; 31.13 ff.).³⁷ In each case, Dante scholarship is able to substantiate the author’s *inventio* in prose and poetry, suspending the alternation between two approaches and methods, the intellectual and analytic on the one hand, the creative and synthetic on the other. As for the prose works *Hyperion* or *Kavanagh*, the twentieth-century reader might find too didactic or even unpoetic Longfellow’s persistent recalling of Dante as a source instead of alluding simply to episodes, characters, or single verses of his poem. How different from the lyrical metamorphoses Dante would undergo throughout the twentieth century, as for instance in T. S. Eliot’s distilling of *Inferno* 3.55–57 in his unforgettable verses of *The Burial of the Dead*: “A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many” (*The Waste Land*, 62–63).³⁸ Yet in Longfellow’s poetics the resistance of scholarship can only partly account for his choice of continuous appeal to his medieval source. At the end of the 1830s, Dante’s reputation could not

be taken for granted in America, nor in England, nor elsewhere in Europe except in Italy, though especially in the New World his name began to circulate among a demanding newborn literary readership.

In the conclusion of both the third lecture and its associated essay, Dante's philosophy and allegory—sometimes confused with each other, as Eliot remarked³⁹—do yield ground to the appreciation of the poem's historical realism, which Longfellow recognized as “one of its most striking characteristics.”⁴⁰ Such a shift was a natural outcome of Longfellow's continued interest in Dante's biography and his age, but it also devolved from his early reading of Friederich von Schelling's *Über Dante in philosophischer Beziehung* (1803), which he translated about ten years later and published in *Graham's Magazine* in 1850.⁴¹ Schelling depicts the world of individuals within the universal and argues that allegory never veils the concrete reality, and symbolism never excludes historical veracity. History and poetry are finally reconciled by Dante's unique inventive imagination.⁴²

The necessary law of this [modern] poetry [. . .] is this:—that the individual gives shape and unity to that portion of the world which is revealed to him, and out of the materials of his time, its History and its Science, creates his own Mythology. For as the ancient world is, in general, the world of classes, so the modern is that of Individuals. In the former the Universal is in truth the particular, the race acts as an individual; in the latter, the Individual is the point of departure, and becomes the Universal. [. . .] And since Universality belongs to the essence of Poetry, it is a necessary condition that the Individual through the highest peculiarity should again become universal, and by his complete speciality become again absolute. Thus through the perfect individuality and uniqueness of his Poem, Dante is the Creator of modern art, which without this arbitrary necessity, and necessary arbitrariness, cannot be imagined.

[. . .] In modern times Science has preceded Poetry and Mythology, which cannot be Mythology, without being universal and drawing into its circle all the elements of the then existing culture, Science, Religion and even Art, and joining in a perfect unity the material not only of the present but of the past. Into this struggle, (since Art demands something definite and limited, while the spirit of the world rushes towards the unlimited, and with ceaseless power sweeps down all barriers,) must the Individual enter, but with absolute freedom, seek to rescue permanent shapes from the fluctuations of time, and within arbitrarily assumed forms to give to the structure of his poem, by its absolute peculiarity, internal necessity and external universality.

This Dante has done. He had before him, as material, the history of the present as well as of the Past. He could not elaborate this into a pure Epos, partly on

account of its nature, partly because, in doing this, he would have excluded other elements of the culture of his time. To its completeness belonged also the Astronomy, the Theology and Philosophy of the time. To these he could not give expression in a Didactic poem, for by so doing he would again have limited himself. Consequently, in order to make his Poem universal, he was obliged to make it historical. An invention, entirely uncontrolled, and proceeding from his own individuality, was necessary, to unite these materials and form them into an organic whole. To represent the ideas of Philosophy and Theology in symbols was impossible, for there then existed no symbolic Mythology. He could quite as little make his Poem purely allegorical, for then again it could not be historical. It was necessary therefore to make it an entirely unique mixture of Allegory and History. [. . .]

In this respect Dante is archetypal, since he has proclaimed what the modern poet has to do, in order to embody into a poetic whole, the entire history and culture of his age—the only mythological material which lies before him. He must from absolute arbitrariness join together the allegorical and historical: he must be allegorical, (and he is so, too, against his will,) because he cannot be symbolical; and he must be historical because he wishes to be poetical.⁴³

Schelling's genuinely philosophical investigation of Dante's impressive modernity must have called into question Longfellow's own method of teaching the *Divine Comedy*. Perplexities about the effectiveness of reading Schelling in class were privately registered in the teacher's journals: "Translating Schelling's paper on 'Dante in a philosophical point of view;' deep,—obscure, rather. To the students of Dante, interesting, though throwing much 'darkness visible' upon the subject to minds not philosophical" (April 18, 1846); "Commenced a course of lectures on Dante. Read to the class Schelling's essay. It must have been darkness deep to them" (April 23, 1846).⁴⁴ But it was then the translator's turn to express his own doubts in the prefatory note to his essay in the *Graham's Magazine*: "In the following elaborate specimen of literary criticism there are many passages which will be very obscure, not to say unintelligible, to those who are not familiar with the philosophic phraseology of the Germans."⁴⁵ Otherwise said, such a reaction from his students was to convince the poet even more of the correctness of his historical and literal approach to Dante's text and about the necessity for the commentator to intervene only in those few loci of the poem that were particularly difficult or obscure and provide an elementary explanation of the philosophical and theological problems at stake. So, in the autumn of 1850, bringing the series of lectures on Italian literature to a close, Longfellow felt obliged

to add a word of explanation about the nature of his method: "At the beginning, two methods presented themselves: that of criticism and analysis, and that of history. I chose the latter as best adapted to you and to myself."⁴⁶

His method of introducing Dante into the curriculum of American colleges and schools saw Longfellow become, together with Lorenzo da Ponte, one of the most probable targets of Margaret Fuller's polemic against the study of the poem in the schools, an exercise that she deemed "a pedantic folly."⁴⁷ However, given her well-known and heartfelt devotion to Dante, her position must not be misunderstood. She herself had taught Dante and urged Emerson to read the *Vita nuova*. In declining his request that she translate it for him, she makes clear that the reason behind her humble *recusatio* reveals something of what Dante meant to her intellectual world: "I should have given you the original, rather than any version of mine. I intended to translate the poems, with which it is interspersed, into plain prose. Milnes and Longfellow have tried each their power at doing it in verse, and have done better, probably, than I could, yet not well. But this would not satisfy me for the public. Besides, the translating Dante is a piece of literary presumption, and challenges a criticism to which I am not sure that I am, as Germans say, *gewachsen*" (1842).⁴⁸ Likewise, the opening comment in her 1845 book review of Cary's translation in the *New York Tribune* reads: "Translating Dante is indeed a labor of love. It is one in which even a moderate degree of success is impossible. No great poet can be well translated. The form of his thought is inseparable from his thought."⁴⁹ Philosophy and theology were thus elements of primary importance in her reading of Dante, whether or not she had fallen under the transcendental spell of Emerson, who, in his journal of June 1840, had confessed that "Dante interests me two ways: I. in the thought which makes or should make me a party to it,—II., in the fact that a man said these things, thought these thoughts."⁵⁰ In any event, in her book review she maintained that a perfect knowledge of Dante could not be attained through translation and that translations could only be of use to translators as a mean of studying the original. In this respect, Cary had not enhanced knowledge about Dante, nor had Longfellow, as we may infer from her 1842 letter to Emerson. It is this attitude that underlies her judgment that it was "pedantic folly" to turn a masterpiece like the *Divine Comedy*, which very few people could truly appreciate, into schoolbooks for little girls and boys. In terms so precise, the accusation

was evidently leveled at Da Ponte and Longfellow, respectively. Longfellow was indeed one of the targets of her arrows: "It is not by studying out the petty strifes or external relations of his time, that you can become acquainted with the thought of Dante. To him these things were only soil in which to plant himself—figures by which to dramatize and evolve his ideas. [. . .] 'The difficulty is in the thought;' and this cannot be obviated by the most minute acquaintance with the history of the times."⁵¹ An aristocratic idea of culture and art? A cult of Dante for a small group of initiates? Maybe both. But Emerson's Dante project was quite different. In 1845 he had already finished his translation of the *Vita nuova*, the first in English, and four years later he enthusiastically welcomed John A. Carlyle's prose translation of the *Inferno* by describing it as "the introduction of Dante to whole nations of men" (August 28, 1849).⁵² Such was the nature of Longfellow's project, and though he never stated it in words as clearly as Emerson, he did realize it in his teaching, translations, and creative writing.

In 1854 Longfellow resigned from Harvard College to devote himself completely to his poetry and to the completion of his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. This new intellectual season, which saw an even stronger mutual contamination of poetry and scholarship, had in fact begun a couple of years before the poet's resignation from Harvard, and the outline of the lectures for the course held from March 12 to June 18 1852 shows some clear evidence of his approaching Dante's text not only as scholar, but also as poet and translator.

- I. Life of Dante. Vita Nuova. Letter of Fra Ilario. Extracts from Boccaccio's "Vita di Dante." Villani's notice of his death. Anecdotes. Arrivabene.
- II. Dante's Writings. The Divina Commedia. Sources. Vision of Frate Alberico, with synopsis of the same by Wright in his "Purgatorio of St. Patrick." Canto I. Translation and Commentary.
- III. Dante's Fame in Italy and other Countries. Macchiavelli. [sic] Voltaire. Dic. Philos. Villemain. Lit. Moyen Age. I. 330.350. Cantos II and III.
- IV. Schelling's Essay on Dante. Extracts from it. Cantos IV and V.
- V. Leigh Hunt: Sketch of Dante. Extracts. Cantos VI and VII. Boccaccio's Ciacco. Dec. IX. 8. Benvenuto Cellini. Interpretation of "Pape Satan." C. XXXII.
- VI. Carlyle's Sketch of Dante in "Heroes and Hero Worship" Cantos VIII and IX.
- VII. Macaulay's Comparison of Milton and Dante. Essays I. Milton. Cantos X and XI.

- VIII. Editions of Dante. Mss of Dante. Calligraphers and Chrysographers of the Middle Ages. Extracts from Montfaucon. Cantos XII and XIII.
- IX. Illustrations of Dante. Andrea and Bernardo Orcagna. Mid. XIV. cent. Michael Angelo. XVI. cent. Giulio Clovio. XVI. cent. Flaxman. Portraits. Arrivabene. IV. 779. Cantos XIV and XV.
- X. Commentators of Dante. Boccaccio. Read the last of his Lectures on a Specimen. Other and later Commentators. Cantos XVI and XVII. Comment. on Dante. XIV cent. Jacopo di Dante 1323. Jacopo della Lana 1349. Ottimo Commento. Pietro Allighieri 1340. Boccaccio 1373–1375. Benvenuto da Imola. 1375. XV cent. Christoforo Landino 1457–1481. XVI cent. Vellutello 1544. Torquato Tasso. Bernardino Daniello 1568. XVII cent. . . . XVIII cent. Volpi 1727. Venturi 1749. Lombardi 1791. XIX cent. Biagioli 1819. Arrivabene. Rossetti.
- XI. English Translations of Dante. Rogers Inferno 1782. Boyd Inferno 1785. all 1802. Howard Inferno 1807. Cary. Inferno 1806. all 1814. Hume Inferno 1812. Wright 1845. Carlyle Inferno. Prose 1849. Parsons Inferno X cantos. Cayley Inferno 1851. Purg. 1853. Dayman Inferno. Pollock 1854. Brooksbank 1854. Cantos XVIII and XIX.
- XII. Poetic Illustrations of Dante. Byron Prophecy of Dante. Boccaccio Sonnet. Michael Angelo Sonnet. Uhland Poem. Tr. by Merivale. II. 349. Parsons on a Bust of Dante. Victor Hugo. Cantos XX, XXI, and XXII analysed. XXIII and XXIV translated.
- XIII. Canto XXV. Tr. in part. XXVI and XXVII analysed. XXVIII translated. XXIX and XXX analysed. XXXI translated.
- XIV. Cantos XXXII, XXXIII, and XXXIV.⁵³

If most of the lectures prepare the *Illustrations on the Divine Comedy* that complete the critical apparatus of the translation in the 1867 Boston edition, lectures X, XI, and XII in particular bear witness to Longfellow's threefold interest in Dante along his entire life and particularly after 1854. In works written within the following decade J. Chesley Mathews discovered several Dantean echoes in his poetry: two lines alluding to Dante's exile in *Prometheus* (1854), two to Francesca's native land in *My Lost Youth* (1855), two echoing Piccarda singing in *Hiawatha* (1854–55), and another pair imitating Dante's words in the dark forest in *Hawthorne* (1864).⁵⁴ But it is only with the six sonnets called *The Divina Commedia* that Dante becomes the unique source of his inspiration, something that was doubtless unprecedented in the history of American poetry.⁵⁵ The sonnets, which surely belong among Longfellow's best lyrics, were written between March 1865 and May 1867, the very years of the Dante Club meetings, whose chief purpose was to review critically Longfellow's

entire translation.⁵⁶ But these were also the years in which Longfellow collected his most relevant criticism for the *Illustrations on the Divine Comedy* that brought to an end his long and fertile dialogue with scholarship and poetry and represented an early but firm step into twentieth-century American Dantism. The sonnets foreshadowed a new spirit, one that focused more on criticism, allegory, and even philology, and which presaged the future direction of the Dante Society. Like Dante's Virgil, Longfellow had led the American reader to the threshold of the promised land of an institutionalized American cult of Dante, but he himself was not to cross over. Even if he found inconceivable any separation between scholarship and poetry, as Eliot would later, this very separation would characterize the critical attitude of the new century, which, so far as concerns Dante, had already begun in 1882.

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NOTES

I wish to thank Heather Cole and Mary Haegert of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, for helping me obtain reproductions of Longfellow's manuscript lectures, and express my sincere gratitude to Tania Zampini of Johns Hopkins University for her precious comments on the final version of this essay.

1. George H. Gifford, "A History of the Dante Society," *Annual Reports of the Dante Society* 74 (1956): 8–9.
2. Francis Otto Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941).
3. Cf. Marcus Cunliffe, *The Literature of the United States* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 167.
4. Cf. Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1884), 115.
5. Cunliffe, *The Literature of the United States*, 168 and 171.
6. Cf. Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought. An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginning to 1920* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), 440–41.
7. Ernst Robert Curtius, *The Medieval Bases of Western Thought*, in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie* (Bern: Francke, 1960), 28.
8. See, for example, the letter Longfellow sent to Ferdinand Freiligrath in 1867: "Of what I have been through during the last six years I dare not venture to write even to you: it is almost too much for any man to bear and live. I have taken refuge in this translation of the Divine Comedy, and this may give it added interest in your sight." *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow with Extracts from his Journals and Correspondence*, ed. by S. Longfellow, 3 vols. (Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1886), 3: 89–90.
9. By examining the works of three classic masters of nineteenth-century fiction, Harry Levin aims to demonstrate that introspection, tragic awareness, and inner sense of evil are more connatural to the American mind than any philosophy of optimism. *The Power of Blackness. Hawthorne, Poe, Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1958).

10. "That the Event and Person meet, we must believe, and that Dante is Italian because, at that moment, he could most live as an Italian. At this moment, he would be born American" (1851); "Dante and Columbus are Italians then; they would be Americans and Germans today" (1857). Cf. R. W. Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, 16 vols, ed. by W. H. Gilman et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960–82), 11: 399; 15: 151.
11. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, 441.
12. Koch, *Dante in America. A Historical and Bibliographical Study* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1896), 40.
13. For Longfellow's Dante library, see J. C. Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," *Emerson Society Quarterly* 62 (1971): 10–22, also reprinted in this volume; for Emerson's, W. Harding, *Emerson's Library* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 76–77.
14. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, 437.
15. R. W. Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, ed. by J. Porte (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), 240, 412. In "Thoughts on History," appeared in *Frazer's Magazine* in 1830 and reprinted in the Boston edition of the *Essays* (1838–39), Thomas Carlyle wrote "There is no History: there is only Biography" and "History is the essence of innumerable biographies."
16. *North American Review* 35 (1832): 283.
17. *Ibid.*, 292.
18. On the nature of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* as the first work devoted to the art of vernacular word philosophically pursued and its difference from contemporary books of rhetoric, see Marianne Shapiro, "*De vulgari eloquentia*": *Dante's Book of Exile* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).
19. Carl L. Johnson, *Professor Longfellow of Harvard* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1944), 86: "The poet in Longfellow always ruled the teacher while he was at Harvard. He could be carried away by a fine rhetorical figure or a well-worded thought. His lectures abound in literary devices such as antitheses, metaphors, plays on words, and allusions. To some young students, who came seeking plain and simple facts, all this seemed at times to be unpardonable ornamentation."
20. *North American Review*, 295.
21. *Ibid.*, 299.
22. Emerson, *Collected Poems and Translations*, ed. by P. Kane and H. Bloom (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1994), 174.
23. Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, 20.
24. Emerson, *The Complete Works*, 12 vols. (New York: Mifflin and Co., 1883–1887), 8: 15; Matthiessen, *American Renaissance*, 40.
25. *Life of H. W. Longfellow*, 1: 275.
26. MS Am 1340, vol. 106, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
27. As to the first lecture, I have reported before the two dates appearing in the manuscript, though there is no doubt that the first is the more correct. That the lecture was indeed finished in January 15, 1838, is demonstrated by the very fact that its description of Dante's life is entirely copied in the 1838 essay.
28. MS Am 1340, vol. 106, Houghton Library, Harvard University, fol. 10.
29. See C. S. Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita Nuova* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 3–5. Leo Spitzer, a colleague to whom Singleton admitted to owe much, entertained the very same idea. See J. Freccero, *Foreword* to L. Spitzer, *Representative Essays*, ed. by A. K. Forcione, H. Lindemberger, M. Sutherland (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), xviii: "For students of ancient and medieval literature there is little need to show that intelligibility is fragile and constantly threatened; history has done the work of deconstructionism, obscuring and effacing many texts that may once have been clear. Spitzer's interpretive effort in his studies of early texts was to recapture that originary sense, and thus may be thought of as the reverse of demystification. [. . .] It may be defined as the reestablishment of a coherence in terms of which the otherwise unintelligible fragments of a text can be shown to have their significance."
30. MS Am 1340, vol. 106, Houghton Library, Harvard University, fol. 1.
31. *Ibid.*, fols. 41–49. See also H. W. Longfellow, *Dante (1838)*, in *Id.*, *Prose Works complete in two volumes* (Boston: J. R. Osgood and Co., 1873), I: 430–31.

32. C. S. Singleton, *Dante Studies 1: Elements of Structure* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 16 n. 2. See also I. Brandeis, *The Ladder of Vision: A Study of Dante's Comedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960), 11.
33. Z. Barański, "Reflecting on Dante in America," *Annali d'Italianistica* 8 (1990): 62.
34. Longfellow, *Dante*, 1: 423. In the first lecture the relative passage ends with an interesting reference to contemporary philosophy: "Only he loves the dreams of a transcendental philosophy better even than the dreams of poetry. And what does he gain thereby? Simply this; it is bruited abroad, and vulgar souls believe it, that all this thinking,—all this study is only to prove there is no God ('se trovar si potesse che Iddio non fosse.')" Truly the Transcendentalists did not fare much better in those days, than in our own." See MS Am 1340, vol. 106, Houghton Library, Harvard University, fols. 32–33.
35. The best interpretation of Guido's disdain is probably that given recently by John Freccero, "Epitaph for Guido: *Inferno* X," *Religion and Literature* 39, no. 3 (2007): 1–29.
36. MS Am 1340, vol. 106, Houghton Library, Harvard University, fol. 122.
37. Cf. Mathews, "Echoes of Dante in Longfellow's 'Hyperion' and 'Kavanagh,'" *Italica* 28, no. 1 (1951): 17.
38. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ed by L. Rainey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 59.
39. T. S. Eliot, "Dante," in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1932), 163: "Sometimes the philosophy is confused with the allegory. The philosophy is an ingredient, it is a part of Dante's world just as it is a part of life; the allegory is the scaffold on which the poem is built."
40. MS Am 1340, vol. 106, Houghton Library, Harvard University, fol. 49. See also *ibid.*, fols. 52–53: "To these things I attribute that sense of reality which characterizes the *Divina Commedia*. I have alluded to this before. For my own part, I read it as if it were a description of real events; as if the poet had really seen what he describes so solemnly. I doubt not the effect is the same in most minds." See also Longfellow, *Dante*, 431.
41. Longfellow, "Dante's *Divina Commedia*. From the German of Schelling," *Graham's Magazine* 36, no. 6 (1850): 351–54. The essay will be reprinted in the 1857 edition of Longfellow's prose works and among the *Illustrations on the Divine Comedy* in the poem's 1867 translation. See *Prose Works*, 1: 434–49; *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Translated by H. W. Longfellow* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1867), 483–89. On the importance of Schelling's essay for German Dantism, see W.P. Friederich, *Dante's Fame Abroad* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1950), 461–62.
42. A. Farinelli, *Dante in Spagna, Francia, Inghilterra, Germania* (Turin: Bocca, 1922), 393.
43. Longfellow, "Dante's *Divina Commedia*. From the German of Schelling," 351–52.
44. *Life of H. W. Longfellow*, 2: 36. See also *ibid.*, 151: "In the evening read over Schelling's Essay on Dante, which is like a dark cave with some gleaming stalactites hanging from the roof." (November 18, 1849).
45. "Dante's *Divina Commedia*," 351.
46. Johnson, *Professor Longfellow of Harvard*, 89.
47. A. La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage: A Historical Survey of Dante Studies in the United States 1800–1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press for Wellesley College, 1948), 50.
48. *Memoirs of M. F. Ossoli* (Boston: BiblioBazaar, 2007) 1: 213–214.
49. M. Fuller, *Italy-Cary's Dante*, in *Life Without and Life Within*, ed. by A. B. Fuller (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1895), 102.
50. Emerson, *The Journals*, 7: 499.
51. Fuller, *Italy-Cary's Dante*, 104–5.
52. R. W. Emerson, T. Carlyle, *Correspondence*, ed. by J. Slater (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 457–58. For Emerson's translation, see *Dante's Vita Nuova*, ed. by J. Chesley Mathews (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960); already in "Harvard Library Bulletin" 11, nos. 2–3 (1957). I have prepared a new critical edition with facing the Sermatelli text of 1576, forthcoming by Aragno editore.

53. MS Am 1340, vol. 107, Houghton Library, Harvard University, fols. 1–33.
54. J. C. Mathews, “Echoes of Dante in Longfellow’s Poetry,” *Italica* 26, no. 4 (1949): 243–45.
55. For a detailed analysis of Longfellow’s presence of Dante in the sonnets, see *ibid.*, 245–52.
56. J. C. Mathews, “Mr. Longfellow’s Dante Club,” *Annual Reports of the Dante Society* 76 (1958): 23–35.

John Dayman and H. W. Longfellow: A Discourse on the Art of Translation

AISHA WOODWARD

Sitting in his Cambridge home in May of 1867, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow composed a letter to the Reverend John Dayman who, two years prior, had completed a full translation of Dante's *Commedia* into English terza rima. Referring to his own recently completed translation, Longfellow wrote: "I shall not expect you to like my translation very much, and shall not be surprised if you do not like it at all."¹ Already America's preeminent poet, and the first in his country to translate the *Commedia* in its entirety, such self-effacing words from Longfellow might seem surprising. Even more surprising, however, may be the story of how Longfellow came upon Dayman's work to begin with.

Acquainted with the little-known British translator indirectly—through their mutual friend Robert Ferguson—Dayman sent Longfellow a copy of his recently published translation of the *Commedia* (1865) in May of 1866.² Ferguson initiated the correspondence between the two translators—believing that Dayman's translation had failed to receive adequate recognition in Europe and hoping that Longfellow might offer words of appreciation and encouragement.³ One year later, Longfellow returned the gesture by sending Dayman a copy of his own completed *Commedia*, followed by a letter commending him for the excellence of his translation. In writing to Dayman, Longfellow praises the translator's work, stating:

In your version you have done wonderfully well, both as regards manners and meaning. And to do this in *terza rima* is a great achievement. I think I comprehend all its difficulties, and can therefore in some measure judge of its success. My own version . . . is, you will see, on a different plan, and was not so difficult a task to accomplish as yours.⁴

Born in 1802, John Dayman was a graduate of Corpus Christi College at Oxford and subsequently served as rector of Skelton, Cumberland, a position he would hold until his death in 1871. From the start of his career, Dayman worked to combine his moral training with writing prowess, publishing an essay entitled "Concerning the Nature of Man" in 1837 and another eight years later on church reform.⁵ While there is a nearly twenty-two year gap between his publication of *Inferno* and the publication of his completed *Commedia*, Dayman was apparently quite busy during those years, delivering lectures across England on liturgical reform and serving on the executive committee of the Church of England Liturgical Reform Society.⁶ Given his interest in the nature of man and church reform, it is not surprising that he would turn to the *Commedia* as an inspirational and challenging project late in his life.

In 1843 Dayman published an English terza rima translation of *Inferno*. As the first translator to render an entire canticle of the *Commedia* into the meter of the original poem, Dayman's translation represents a landmark among the now myriad English translations. Dayman's publication of the entire *Commedia* (in 1865), however, was not the first English terza rima translation of Dante's entire work; both Charles Bagot Cayley (1854) and Claudia Hamilton Ramsay (1863) beat him to that claim.⁷

In the very brief preface to his *Inferno* translation, Dayman notes the unusually solitary manner in which he went about his work:

In justice to myself, no less than others, I have rigidly abstained from making any acquaintance with the English translations which have preceded this; and hence the candid reader will refer whatever coincidences he may discover to our common original.⁸

While reviews of Dayman's work were primarily positive, there were some who doubted his claim of unfamiliarity with earlier translations. Ichabod C. Wright, in print with his own modified terza rima translation of *Inferno* in 1833, privately raised suspicions of Dayman's fidelity. Wright completed his translation of the *Commedia* by 1840.⁹ An exceptionally fastidious man (completing two complete revisions of his entire *Commedia* after its first publication), Wright's copy of Dayman's translation contains several marginal notes of skepticism, with phrases such as "my word," "my rhyme," "suspicious," and "most suspicious."¹⁰ Continuing, Wright asserts that Dayman "pretends ignorance of my translation, though it has been published ten years."¹¹ Most disparagingly, Wright calls Dayman's

work “a burlesque upon Dante; rhyme without either sense or poetry, a mere verbal translation.”¹² These criticisms, while scathing, are generally believed to be unfounded and may more reflect Wright’s pettiness than Dayman’s dishonesty.¹³

Other critics were more benevolent. In August 1843, *Spectator* reviewed Dayman’s work, suggesting that he “gives the English reader a better idea of Dante, his matter, and manner, than any previous translator. . . . convey[ing] to the English reader a more spirited copy of the poet’s images and a more vivid representation of his manner.”¹⁴ In 1844 *The Monthly Review* also offered lavish praise of Dayman’s work, noting that although he occasionally took “certain liberties,” he had ultimately produced “something that more resembles Dante, that will convey to the English reader a truer and better idea of the Florentine, than even Cary has done.”¹⁵

It was this temptation to compare his work to that of Henry Cary, whose 1814 blank verse translation of the *Commedia* was considered the seminal translation of the period, that prompted Dayman’s much longer and theoretical preface to his completed *Commedia* in 1865.

In attempting to make the “Divina Commedia” better known to English readers, it might have been held only a fitting mark of deference to my original to reproduce it, if practicable, in the metre of the poet’s own choice. But on the appearance of my “Inferno,” its Terza Rima was denounced as the one “deleterious ingredient” which corrupted the version throughout, and as placing it on this very principle in disadvantageous contrast to Mr. Cary’s.¹⁶

Ever conscious of the tendency to compare his work to that of Cary, Dayman uses the preface to his completed *Commedia* to articulate his position as an ardent (if self-conscious) advocate of the merits of preserving Dante’s rhyme scheme. Rather than presenting a discussion of what compelled him to choose the *Commedia* as his life’s primary work or accounting for the conspicuous gap in time between the publication of *Inferno* and the publication of the entire work, Dayman instead uses the preface to his translation to present an exposition on the necessity of form to poetry. Referencing August Wilhelm Schlegel, Dayman notes: “The poetic spirit requires to be limited, that it may move within its range with a becoming liberty . . . works of genius cannot, therefore, be allowed to be without form.”¹⁷ Dayman continues by discussing different types of form, noting that the form Dante employs is not merely mechanical,

which has no reference to its purpose but instead is “organical” and thus “innate . . . unfold[ing] itself from within.”¹⁸ Linking Dante’s meter to the idea of an inextricable, organic bond, Dayman presents a spirited case for the danger of divorcing the poet’s meaning from his vehicle of expression.

While at times pedantic, Dayman’s exposition on the relationship of form to poetry reveals the extent to which he considered his decision to replicate the *Commedia* in Dante’s rhyme scheme. He moves seamlessly from topics of classical poetry to literary devices to Dante’s vision of the cosmos, concluding by linking the poet’s position as a “Triunitarian” to the geometric practicality of the employment of the terza rima. Regarding this, Dayman exhibits a sophisticated perspective on the salient link between the geometric imagery formed by the terza rima and the theological objectives of the poet:

I may further urge, in support of these views, how appropriate is the ever-recurring cadence of the Terza Rima to that *orbicular* construction within which the poet’s visions successively present themselves. Its circling movement once begun, and thenceforward continuous at the author’s will, being, so to speak, intrinsically *unlimited*, is perhaps, of all rhymed forms which human genius could have devised, the one best fitted to suggest the *illimitable*. . . . The Terza Rima may still be that metrical hexagon, based on its triangle, which, of conceivable figures, is the fittest of all to fill space.¹⁹

As the preface draws to a close, Dayman concludes that the terza rima is “a structure [Dante] *has* chosen, and it stamps his work throughout with that image which he had proposed to himself as its climax. Consequently any version in any language, whatever its other merits, which neglects this essential element of the poet’s plan, must so far fall short of transfusing his spirit.”²⁰ Terminating his exposition with this contentious declaration, it is understandable why Dayman felt such anxiety after sending a copy of the completed translation to Longfellow, an ardent literalist.²¹

In 1867, a year after Dayman’s translation arrived at the Longfellow home, Longfellow’s own translation was published. Returning the gesture of his British comrade, Longfellow sent three copies to Ferguson’s care in England: one for Ferguson, one for Fanny Farrer,²² and one for Dayman. In his letter to Ferguson, dated May 8, 1867, Longfellow describes his translation in this way:

The only merit my book has is that it is exactly what Dante says, and not what the translator imagines he might have said if he had been an Englishman. In other

words, while making it rhythmic, I have endeavored to make it as literal as a prose translation.²³

These sentiments echo those made by Longfellow at other times regarding the art of translation. Longfellow's reputation was that of a staunch literalist, characteristic of the majority of Victorian translators, who saw the duty of the translator as one to faithfully represent the words and phrases of the original and not to impose meaning onto the text.²⁴

In light of these sentiments, it may seem surprising that he would write to Dayman, a scholar of entirely opposing sentiments, in such a self-effacing manner. Indeed, the letter he sent to Dayman came on the heels of the letter to Ferguson, just a few weeks later. Did Longfellow suddenly have a change of heart? Unlikely. We may well assume that Longfellow was merely being polite in his praise of Dayman's work. However, it is also possible, given his comments on Dayman's preface, that Longfellow did reevaluate his position, if only temporarily. In his letter to Dayman he states, "What you say of the *terza rima* in the Preface is certainly of great weight . . . and yet in an understanding of the poem, I think there is much in common between us."²⁵ He signs his letter "with great regard and renewed thanks for your book,"²⁶ further suggesting that, in the very least, Longfellow did gain a certain degree of appreciation for the common struggle of translators as well as an understanding of the peculiar difficulties facing those who would attempt an English *terza rima* translation.

Indeed, in spite of their differing views, Longfellow's suggestion in his letter to Dayman that "there is much in common between us" may still hold true. Consider, for example, Longfellow's translation of the Bertran de Born's famous closing speech at *Inferno* 28.133–42:

And so that thou may carry news of me,
Know that Bertram de Born am I, the same
Who gave to the Young King the evil comfort.
I made the father and the son rebellious;
Achitophel not more with Absalom
And David did with his accursed goadings.
Because I parted persons so united,
Parted do I now bear my brain, alas!
From its beginning, which is in this trunk.
Thus is observed in me the counterpoise.²⁷

Dayman's translation of the same tercets reads as follows:

And know me—so thou shalt my doom report—
Bertrand de Born, who did the Younger King
With vile instilments banefully exhort.
'Twixt sire and son I caused rebellion spring;
Not more Achitophel's malignant dart
Did the lost Absalom 'gainst David sting.
Because I wrought so joinèd ones to part,
Myself my brain must parted bear, alas!
From its own source within this trunk, my heart.
On me retaliation thus doth pass.²⁸

Longfellow's lines seem to read as he might have wished them to be read: as true to Dante's words as he could possibly be. The less desirable effects of this approach are manifested in awkward syntactical inversions and archaisms that are somewhat typical of Longfellow's translation. His choice of the word "counterpoise" may represent a most literal English rendering of Dante's *contrapasso*, but it lacks the energy and vengeance conveyed in many other translations of the word. Dayman, in this instance, gives a relatively successful rendition of Dante's work, but it is difficult to escape the lingering suspicion that certain words or meanings have been lost in the pursuit to preserve rhyme. At moments in Dayman's translation, both his rhyme and rhythm seem off, with accents indicating unusual pronunciation (e.g., "joinèd" in line 139), and the employment of somewhat liberal word choice (e.g., "malignant dart" for *malvagi punzelli*). In spite of traditional criticisms of each of these approaches to the art of translation, these lines from *Inferno* 28 may serve as a reminder of the sacrifices both men made in pursuit of their own conceptions of fidelity. Each may be criticized for so resolutely defending his method, but neither can be doubted in the sincerity and perspective that he possessed in approaching Dante's work.

What then might we conclude about these two translators? Their current status in the world of Dante translations may give us some indication of their present value. While enormously popular when published, Longfellow's translation fell into obscurity by the middle of the twentieth century. However, the translation has recently come back into print after a forty-year hiatus, and this may serve to reinstate its status as an important contribution to English translations.²⁹ However, "the verdict of posterity

has been heavily against Dayman,” Gilbert F. Cunningham writes, “and his translation is forgotten.”³⁰ Indeed, Dayman’s translation was never republished after its first edition in 1865. What accounts for this disappearance? For one, it is the nature of translations to fade, and each era seems to adopt a myopic view of its approach to translation. Regarding Dayman’s translation, perhaps it is true (as Cunningham suggests) that the most that can be said is that it is “slightly better than some others of the period.”³¹ However, in reducing Dayman to the perceived success of his translation to withstand the test of time, we may miss the greater contributions his work as a translator yielded. Indeed, what is interesting about Dayman’s place in the history of English translations of Dante may less be a question of the *quality* of the translation than of the discourse his 1865 preface incited. This preface represents an important early example of a thoughtful examination of the theoretical underpinnings of the art of translating Dante’s work. In a case where, as Dayman rightly points out, the “physiognomy” of poem’s metrical structure is so evident,³² the translation of the *Commedia* presented a unique challenge to the ambitious men and women wishing to render Dante’s words into their native tongues.

Dayman’s preface, in this way, proves to being a fine exposition on the necessity of preserving organic form in translation, and his 1843 translation of *Inferno* stands as the first proof that it could be done—that an entire canticle could be rendered in translation in the Poet’s own rhyme scheme. Dayman’s ambition, theoretical observations, and quality of translation secures his position as an important contributor to nineteenth-century Dante translation, and Longfellow’s endorsement—in spite of his own differing convictions—makes this all the more convincing.

It deserves mention that the correspondence between these two translators did not end with Longfellow’s letter of 1867. Indeed, Dayman responded to Longfellow just a month later, delighted with his American comrade’s review and suggesting that “were it a matter of consequence to me personally to sell my book, I should have sought your permission to make your opinion more widely known.”³³ Continuing, Dayman returns compliments to Longfellow on his then popular translation, stating:

... while you will not expect of me to abandon my principle on the metrical question, I am indeed both pleased and proud to think how much we share the same respectful feeling for our great original—you often comfort me by showing how literal I have been—often admonish me that I might have been more literal—and seeing your version, one wonders that Cary was not more Dantesque.³⁴

Their mutual affection for Dante's work seemingly supersedes any question of greater merit or success in both Longfellow and Dayman's letters to one another. While both remained fastened to their perspectives, both—particularly Longfellow—also resisted the urge to suggest the flaws of one approach to translation over the other. Moreover, this correspondence proved to exist as more than a polite exchange to satisfy the request of their friend, Robert Ferguson; indeed, the two translators exchanged letters again, in 1870, the year before Dayman's death.³⁵

Dayman and Longfellow, through their own personal and public writings, and through their familiarity with each other's work, represent a generation of translators who were not only thoughtful in the task, but who also served to shape the discourse for years to come. Certainly, the question of how to remain faithful to Dante's text has not disappeared from discussion; indeed, it has seen many mutations over the years, with multiple variations emerging even within the terza rima tradition itself. By the start of the twentieth century, at least ten different full translations of the *Commedia* into English terza rima already existed. Between 1933 and 1943, Laurence Binyon worked closely with Ezra Pound to publish a highly acclaimed English terza rima translation of the *Commedia*. Six years after Binyon finished, Dorothy Sayers began (and Barbara Reynolds completed) one of the most popular terza rima translations of the past century. Even now, the terza rima tradition has not abated, with the relatively recent and successful translations of Robert Pinsky (1994) and Michael Palma (2002) affirming that the attempt to preserve Dante's rhyme scheme has and will remain a crucial element in the ever-changing discourse on the art of translation.

A Carlisle paper, referring to Dayman's death in 1871, had this to say about the translator:

[He was] a scholar of rare attainments both in the ancient and the modern languages, and whose translation of Dante takes the highest rank for the union of the qualities of fidelity to the original and felicity in the English rendering.³⁶

An exceedingly gracious description, but also one that seems somewhat apt. Dayman's contribution to the world of Dante translation, though largely forgotten, nevertheless played a small but important part in its evolution, and the skill and deliberation with which he set about the task are revealed most eloquently in his own writing. This fusion of scholarship, deliberation, and discourse on translation may very well be the most

important unrecognized contribution that Dayman and Longfellow secured for themselves in the nineteenth century and serves only to enrich their legacy today.

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NOTES

1. This letter (shelf mark: M112.1.1, vault box 1, folder 38a) was acquired by the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives at Bowdoin College in 2008. I wish to thank Arielle Saiber, associate professor of Italian at Bowdoin College, for sharing this letter with me and for providing invaluable advice throughout the research for this piece. I would also like to thank Richard Lindemann, director of special collections at Bowdoin College, for information regarding the letter's acquisition.
2. This translation, housed at the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site in Cambridge, Massachusetts, bears the inscription, "To Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with the best respects of The Translator. Skelton Rectory, Pensith, May 5th, 1866."
3. Robert Ferguson to Longfellow, February 9, 1865, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340.2, container #1952, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
4. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to John Dayman, May 31, 1867.
5. George Clement Boase and William Prideaux Courtney, *Biblioteca Comubiensis*, vol. 3 (London, 1882), 1153. The *British Magazine and Monthly Register* of 1837 offered a rather harsh critique of Dayman's "Essay Concerning the Nature of Man."
6. Stephen Taylor, *From Cranmer to Davidson: A Church of England Miscellany* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1999), 363, 369.
7. Several English translators had published portions of the *Commedia* in English terza rima prior to Dayman, including William Hayley (London, 1782) and E. N. Shannon (London, 1836).
8. John Dayman, *Inferno* (London, 1843), v.
9. Paget Toynbee called Wright's translation "a sort of bastard terza rima." The rhyme scheme for his translation was *a b a c d c e f e* (and so forth). See Paget Toynbee in Eleanor Prescott Hammond, *Dante in English: A Terza Rima Translation and Critique of Terza Rima Translations of the Inferno of Dante* (Chicago, 1919), vi.
10. Gilbert F. Cunningham, *The Divine Comedy in English: A Critical Biography, 1782–1900* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 34.
11. Paget Toynbee, *Dante in English Literature: From Chaucer to Cary*, vol. 2 (London: Methuen, 1909), 680.
12. Ibid.
13. Cunningham, *The Divine Comedy in English*, 37.
14. Toynbee, *Dante in English Literature*, 682.
15. *The Monthly Review* 1 (1844): 46. Cary was the second person to translate the entire *Commedia* into English (1814), and his version was considered the model translation during Dayman's time. Before Cary, in 1802, Henry Boyd was the first in print with an English translation of the entire *Commedia*. Boyd's translation was in six-line rhymed stanzas; Cary's, in blank verse.
16. Dayman, *The Divine Comedy* (London, 1865), viii.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., xiv.
20. Ibid.

21. Dayman was apparently most anxious during the one year that elapsed between his translation's arrival at the Longfellow home and Longfellow's response. In a letter to Longfellow, dated December 5, 1866, Robert Ferguson noted, "I am very glad to hear that you are going to write to Mr. Dayman—it will much gratify a good scholar and very worthy man. Indeed, to say the truth, he has been rather conscious about it and has attacked me whenever I have met him, about it."

22. Fanny Farrer (1801–1886) was an English admirer of Longfellow, encouraged to begin a correspondence with him at the suggestion of Cornelius Felton, at that time a professor of Greek at Harvard. Although Longfellow and Farrer never met, the two carried on a lengthy correspondence, spanning over two decades.

23. Longfellow, "Letter to Robert Ferguson," in *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, vol. 5, ed. Andrew Hilen (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1982), 134. This description bears a striking resemblance to the *Spectator's* review of Dayman's 1843 *Inferno* translation, which states: "A translation of Dante should as nearly as possible let the English reader know what Dante *is*—for that is what the English reader wishes to know—not what the poet might have been had he been our own countryman" (in Toynbee, *Dante in English Literature*, 682). This sense of relinquishing the desire to assimilate Dante's words is an important idea that Longfellow clearly incorporated into his discourse on translation.

24. Werner P. Frederick, *Dante's Fame Abroad: 1350–1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 548.

25. Longfellow to John Dayman, 1867.

26. *Ibid.* Hilen's collection of Longfellow's letters does not include this or any other letters to John Dayman, although Longfellow himself did record the writing of this letter in a private ledger where he logged all the letters he composed. The same day he wrote to Dayman, he also wrote to Claudia Hamilton Ramsay, a copy of whose translation, published in 1863, he also possessed. Longfellow makes no mention in his personal journals of either correspondence. Two days after writing to Ramsay and Dayman, however, Longfellow does make a passing mention of talking to Thomas Williams Parsons about theories of translation. At the time, Parsons (1819–1892) was at work on his own translation of the *Commedia* (into rhymed quatrains).

27. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri* (Boston, 1895), 84.

28. Dayman, *The Divine Comedy*, 219.

29. With the popularity of Matthew Pearl's bestselling novel *The Dante Club* (New York: Random House, 2003), Pearl and Harvard professor Lino Pertile worked together to edit and release a new edition of Longfellow's translation (New York: Modern Library, 2003).

30. Cunningham, *The Divine Comedy in English*, 37.

31. *Ibid.*, 38.

32. Dayman, *The Divine Comedy*, ix.

33. Dayman to Longfellow, June 29, 1867.

34. *Ibid.*

35. These letters, as well as Ferguson's extensive correspondences with Longfellow, are housed at the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

36. Charles Hole, *The Life of the Reverend and Venerable William Whitmarsh Phelps, M.A.*, vol. 1 (Reading, 1871), 251 n. 1.

Longfellow's Dante: Literary Achievement in a Transatlantic Culture of Print

PATRICIA ROYLANCE

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1867 translation of the *Commedia* is often described as "the first full American translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*."¹ This is factually true. But several assumptions underlying this statement do not accurately convey the circumstances under which this book came into being. Identifying Longfellow's text as the first full *American* translation situates it firmly within a national context. Despite its status as a translation, and therefore necessarily a bridge between medieval Italian and nineteenth-century U.S. culture, the "American" designation places Longfellow's achievement within the field of U.S. cultural production, to be measured against what other U.S. translators had previously accomplished. But for Longfellow's feat to be anything more than a literary-historical footnote, the publication of his translation should presumably have had a significant cultural effect, namely, the introduction of Dante's masterpiece in its totality to U.S. readers for the first time.

In fact, Longfellow's translation was one of many, and his intentions had little to do with introducing a nationally defined, Dante-illiterate readership to the wonders of the *Divine Comedy*. He and the other members of the so-called Dante Club with whom he collaborated sought to create a version of Dante's text that would earn respect within the international scholarly community, already awash in Dante translations.² Although their internationalist orientation had nationalist elements, Longfellow and other U.S. Dantists, such as Charles Eliot Norton, participated actively in an elite transatlantic culture of print and Longfellow's Dante should be read in that light.³

In contrast, touting Longfellow's Dante as the first full *American* translation, and as therefore significant, assumes the material autonomy of nineteenth-century U.S. print culture. It would make no sense to label a text as the first in a field unless that field could be separated out as distinct from other fields. Because of this supposed autonomy, the first full American translation of the *Divine Comedy* would therefore presumably have provided the U.S. public with an unprecedented level of access to Dante's work. As the back cover of Matthew Pearl's recent trade book edition of Longfellow's *Inferno* translation states, "In 1867, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow completed the first American translation of *Inferno* and thus introduced Dante's literary genius to the New World."⁴ Although undoubtedly overblown, in the nature of most back-cover rhetoric, the claim makes explicit the assumed stakes of the first full published translation of any Italian-language work in an English-speaking country.

The idea of a monolingual public lacking access to foreign-language works that had not first been translated into English perpetuates a myth of linguistic homogeneity in the United States that does not accord with the consistently multilingual nature of American culture.⁵ However, languages like Italian did not receive much emphasis in U.S. education at the time, as Longfellow, a professor of modern European languages, well knew. Before the waves of Italian immigration at the end of the nineteenth century, U.S. literacy in Italian was limited primarily to the country's scattered Italian immigrants—many of them political exiles, "individuals of high culture and education"—and the well-educated and usually well-traveled U.S. elite.⁶ In his working copy of Dante's text, Longfellow listed twelve different Italian editions of the *Divina Commedia*, many of which he owned; however, these editions could not have been the basis for popular access to and familiarity with the *Divine Comedy*.⁷

Longfellow also listed thirteen different English translations in his working copy; whenever he taught or translated from this volume, he was reminded of the *Comedy*'s substantial prior English-language history. Charles Eliot Norton's April 1866 *North American Review* article, "Dante and His Latest English Translators," contained an even fuller bibliography of English translations: in all, twenty-two versions of either the *Inferno* or the whole *Divine Comedy* published between 1782 and 1865.⁸ The idea that the first full U.S. publication of the *Divine Comedy* would radically advance access to Dante's work in the United States presumes a fundamental separation between the English and U.S. book markets. Longfellow's translation would introduce "Dante's literary genius to the New

World” only if the New World had not already been exposed to the many English translations of the *Divine Comedy*.

In fact, nineteenth-century U.S. print culture had significant transatlantic dimensions. Michael Winship argues from customs records that “during the nineteenth century the United States was fully and actively involved in the international, and especially the transatlantic, trade in books,” a trade that saw “tremendous, even exponential growth” from 1828 to 1868.⁹ U.S. booksellers imported English books likely to be popular with their customers, but their buying was also sometimes more precisely targeted. For example, Ticknor and Fields, the publisher of Longfellow’s *Divine Comedy*, operated a retail bookstore, and “the firm sent special orders for single books to London for its retail customers, who included many of the intellectual elite of Boston and Cambridge.”¹⁰ Working from abroad, talented “book hunters,” such as Massachusetts-born Obadiah Rich, also tracked down desired foreign titles.¹¹ British books therefore clearly made their way in great numbers into the United States in the decades before Longfellow’s *Dante* was published, although certainly not everyone had equal access to these materials: money and social connection greatly facilitated participation in this transatlantic circuit of print.

The well-off also had disproportionate access to English books through high-end libraries, often attached to colleges or structured as private social institutions with limited membership. These kinds of libraries developed thorough, cultured, and scholarly collections by actively importing books from England.¹² Longfellow himself participated in and benefited from this kind of transatlantic book traffic. In his capacity as librarian of Bowdoin College (where he taught from 1829 to 1835), he acquired several works of Dante for the college, including an edition of the *Divine Comedy*. Earlier as a student at Bowdoin, Longfellow had served as librarian for the Peucinian Society, where he had certainly had access to that literary club’s substantial print collection, including several Dante translations. And later in his career he had access to the resources of the library at Harvard, and in fact records indicate that he did borrow Dante titles.¹³ Collegiate and social libraries provided some U.S. readers with crucial points of access to British and European books, but these classed institutions served only the top end of the reading public.¹⁴

If a wealthy U.S. citizen in this period could not obtain a desired foreign book through either a bookseller or a library, he—and less commonly she—could draw on personal networks to acquire the item. In the

1830s and 1840s, Longfellow's friend and later Dante Club compatriot George Washington Greene was living in Italy and functioned as a conduit for Longfellow to obtain Italian editions of Dante.¹⁵ U.S. scholars whose work required access to significant quantities of European books and manuscripts cultivated international connections, often established through letters of reference and the recommendations of friends living abroad.¹⁶ Amateur literati also took advantage of these modes of international circulation. Kathleen Verduin writes that "copies of Dante in Italian were . . . in demand among the intelligentsia in the early Republic and were often procured as souvenirs or gifts during European travel."¹⁷ Travel and extended residence in England and Europe, available only to certain privileged social classes, created informal pathways by which foreign books could find their way into the hands of U.S. readers.

However, in addition to the various methods by which foreign books entered the United States, many more U.S. readers gained access to foreign *texts* through the active "culture of reprinting" that dominated U.S. publishing in the mid-nineteenth century. As Meredith McGill has shown, in the absence of an international copyright law U.S. re-publication of English texts was common, and in fact "was considered by many to be proof of democratic institutions' remarkable powers of enlightenment" in making inexpensive books and cultural education available to a very differently classed group of readers than those served by book importation.¹⁸

For example, Charles Eliot Norton wrote that Englishman H. F. Cary's "well-known" 1814 translation of the *Divine Comedy* enjoyed "a wide and long-continued popularity" in the United States through its initial 1822 and subsequent U.S. reprintings.¹⁹ Verduin surmises "a fairly general readership" for this translation, based on Emerson's comment that "all studious youths and maidens" in the U.S. had encountered Dante in the wake of its publication.²⁰ Although the time and resources required to be "studious" indicate some class privilege in having access to this work, the U.S. reprinting of Cary undoubtedly facilitated wider class and gender access to the *Divine Comedy* than did many other English translations, most of which remained available only by means of the more expensive route of importation.

Both imported and reprinted books tend to be omitted from scholarly accounts of a national literary culture. When foreign books and texts are included in the picture, the U.S. reading culture during this period can

be recognized as deeply if unevenly transatlantic. Material circuits linking U.S. and British print culture had been reliably established, but the nodes of this transatlantic network—both people and places—clustered disproportionately in the spheres of the upper class.²¹ In the experience of scholars and literati such as Longfellow and his Dante Club friends, “British and American readers might be understood to be inhabiting not just overlapping ‘reading communities,’ but a single reading community that transcended national boundaries.”²²

This sense of cultural unity with Britain can be seen clearly in Norton’s article on Dante’s “English Translators” and its primarily linguistic frame of reference. Of the four recent works that inspired Norton’s review, three had been printed in London and produced by Englishmen; the fourth, by U.S. dentist and poet Thomas William Parsons, had been printed in Boston. Norton writes that “special difficulties beset the English translator of Dante,” because “our language is very poor in rhymes as compared with the Italian” (522). The word “English,” for Norton, indicates a language, not a nationality. In this same vein, he discusses the reaction that an “English reader” will have to various efforts to translate Dante’s text into English (523). (In an exchange with George Ticknor, Longfellow also uses the phrase “English reader” to mean a reader reading in the English language.)²³ Particularly when occupying the posture of a translator, whose principal identity while engaged in the act of translation is linguistic, Norton sees the world from within a linguistic rather than a national community: that is, the necessarily transatlantic community of English speakers. He feels this sense of participation in the culture of the English language so completely that it enlarges and alters his sense of his own “native” tradition. In his critique of attempts to translate the *Divine Comedy* into “blank verse fashioned after the manner of Milton and Tennyson”—because “the manner of an English poet . . . is an unfit vehicle for rendering a poet so un-English in style as Dante”—he calls this unfit style “the cadences of our native poets” (527). In this case, his home, that which he considers “native” to him, is a language, not a country.

Given the established material channels, linguistic continuities, and ideological affiliations that linked Longfellow and his fellow Bostonian Dantists so firmly to British print culture, Longfellow’s Dante translation would not have seemed like an isolated print event, despite it being the first full U.S. publication of the *Divine Comedy*. Longfellow in fact published his translation amid a spate of such publishing. He wrote to Charles

Sumner on April 2, 1865, that “there is a perfect deluge of English translations of Dante. Last year, three appeared;—and this year already one, and another announced” (4:480). Norton wrote that “translation after translation has in late years competed with Cary’s for pre-eminence” (518–19). That the majority of this “perfect deluge” came from British translators did not make the market seem less crowded to Longfellow and Norton.

In the context of transatlantic print culture, then, Longfellow’s achievement consists not in having produced a translation at all—that would not have seemed particularly special—but in having produced one according to a meritorious method of translation. As Norton writes in his review of Longfellow’s version, it wouldn’t have been “worth while for him to add another to the fifteen or twenty translations of the *Divine Comedy*, or one of its three divisions, which already exist in English, unless it were clear that they all had been made . . . upon an erroneous method.”²⁴ Therefore, for Norton, “in order to appreciate correctly the intention and the achievement of Mr. Longfellow, there is need to understand the principles which have determined him in the choice of his method” (“Longfellow’s Translation” 124–25). One should not be impressed that an American had managed to complete a full translation of Dante’s text, because of course that would imply that one might be surprised that an American could manage it and would thereby reinforce a perception of U.S. cultural parochialism with which literati such as Norton did not identify. Rather, Longfellow’s key accomplishment was his translation’s admirable linguistic fidelity to the original, which nonetheless avoided ungainly literalism (at least in the estimation of Norton, who played a considerable role in its production). This translational method may have distinguished Longfellow’s Dante from the pack of other English Dantes; it also arguably partook of the elitism of transatlantic print culture.

To produce a readable English poem, Longfellow sacrificed Dante’s terza rima rhyme scheme, almost impossible to achieve elegantly in English, but he did faithfully replicate line breaks as closely as possible and tried to achieve the flavor of Dante’s use of language. Sometimes this resulted in “linguistic infelicities,” but Christoph Irmscher argues that these moments “can also be read as an intentional attempt to defamiliarize the text, to remind the reader that she is, in fact, reading not a Longfellow poem but a translation from another language, a work that is neither

Italian nor English yet both.”²⁵ For Irmscher, this method supported Longfellow’s progressive cosmopolitan project to facilitate his readers’ exposure to the foreign.

But in order to apprehend Longfellow’s accomplishment properly and to recognize oneself as the subject of an enlightening defamiliarization, a reader would have had to be familiar with the *Divine Comedy* in the first place (otherwise, the infelicities would just seem to be clumsiness). The ideal reader of Longfellow’s translation would have read one or more previous English translations and would also know the original text itself quite well—someone like Norton, in fact, or like George Ticknor, who wrote Longfellow that “I shall always read your translation with the original ringing in my ears” (*Letters* 5:153). This kind of reader hears the echo of the original line by Dante in his mind as he reads the translated line by Longfellow and can therefore appreciate the subtleties of how Longfellow’s translational choices play off of Dante’s poem.

Similarly, contemporary critic John Fiske found fault with Longfellow’s frequent rejection of common Germanic words in favor of obscure Romance words with an etymological link to Dante’s actual word choices. A “scholar” possessing a “long familiarity with the Romanic languages” might endorse the use of the English word *dolent* “because it calls up in his mind, through the medium of its equivalent *dolente*, the same associations which the latter calls up in the mind of the Italian himself.” But this reflects the “acquired taste” of the “literary epicure,” not “the common English reader, who loves plain fare”: “It is only by long and profound study that we can thus temporarily vest ourselves, so to speak, with a French or Italian consciousness in exchange for our English one.”²⁶ The experience of reading Longfellow’s translation varies depending on the extent of a particular reader’s familiarity with Italian words and their associations and therefore on the extent of the privilege that allowed him to acquire that profound familiarity.

Norton makes plain the elitism of the ideal reader profile for Longfellow’s translation: “It will not be surprising, indeed, if many readers who take up these volumes . . . should experience, as they read, a certain sense of disappointment, and fail to receive the easy gratification for which they looked. But the fault will be in themselves, not in the author or the translator. Their disappointment will arise from their own want of culture.”²⁷ Only those who have no interest in the act of reading as a source

of “easy gratification” possess the “culture” necessary to enjoy Longfellow’s text. Although here Norton expresses more hauteur than Longfellow probably would have, Longfellow did commend Norton on this review: “I say the article is excellent; a lucid and fair statement of this subject of poetic translation” (5:155).²⁸

According to both allies like Norton and skeptics like Fiske, then, Longfellow’s translation could best be appreciated by those whom George Ticknor calls the “scholarlike lovers of Dante” (5:153). Thus Longfellow’s translation did not set out to democratize Dante in the United States—a fact indicated by, if nothing else, the hefty price of five dollars for the 1867 edition.²⁹ The demographic for whom this translation was best suited already knew the original and had access to and familiarity with the many earlier English versions. The intellectual and socioeconomic exclusivity of those fully able to appreciate Longfellow’s accomplishment and to enjoy his translation flows logically from the cultural context that produced the translation in the first place. The books that Longfellow would have needed to consult in order to create his text, the spaces in which he would have consulted those books, the institutions and channels by which he acquired them and the people with whom he discussed them—all partook of a transatlantic print culture whose formal and informal patterns of circulation oriented heavily toward the wealthy elite.

Elite participation in the transatlantic nineteenth-century culture of print was not incompatible with a national significance for Longfellow’s translation: transnationalism did not preclude nationalism among U.S. literati, whose strong sense of national identity coexisted with international affiliations and transatlantic spheres of activity. Norton did discuss Longfellow’s translation in national terms, as “the first complete American translation of the Divine Comedy,” an “homage paid by the new and modern world to the old.”³⁰ But this rhetoric was tempered by the dependence of U.S. nationalism on European acknowledgment. Longfellow, “the American poet whose fame has spread widest over Europe, and whose name has long been familiar in Florence,” had produced a translation that Norton claimed would “make the Divine Comedy better known to readers in America and England than any translation that has preceded it.”³¹ The index of Longfellow’s status was his European celebrity and the extent of his impact on English readers.

Similarly, Longfellow wrote to his friend Charles Sumner, a politician then residing in Washington, requesting that the *Inferno* volume produced

in 1865 be presented to the Italian minister: "I want you and the Minister to look at the volume. It is beautiful, and worthy of the Italian press;—all written, printed, bound in Cambridge, Middlesex County, Massachusetts!" (4:464). The growth and development of U.S. cultural achievement involved not only the increased production of high-quality texts by U.S. authors but also increased production of high-quality books by U.S. bookmakers. In an 1855 speech, New York publisher George Palmer Putnam made special mention of "the Mechanical aspects of our progress in book-making," saying that "we may point with pride to specimens of the 'black art,' not a whit behind the best across the sea."³² Significantly, both Longfellow and Putnam frame their nationalist pride in native book production in comparative terms, as "worthy of the Italian press" and "not a whit behind the best across the sea."

Very little sense of this transnationalist context for U.S. literary achievement remains in modern scholarly accounts of Longfellow's Dante. When commentators seek to articulate the significance of the historical moment when Longfellow produced the translation, they often gravitate toward personal, psychological explanations, in which Longfellow, identifying with the tortured longing of Dante for Beatrice, used his translation to work through his grief over his wife Fanny's death in 1861.³³ Commentators also often advance national explanations, which argue that the *Divine Comedy* spoke profoundly to a country divided by the hell of civil war.³⁴ Longfellow's letters and journals do indeed indicate the importance for him of Fanny's death and the unfolding of the Civil War, in which his son Charley fought and was wounded.

But in a Victorian culture where the practices of mourning were highly ritualized and self-aware, it makes sense to interpret Longfellow's grief work after Fanny's death as not entirely individual.³⁵ For example, Tennyson's 1850 *In Memoriam*—a poem series inspired by the death of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam and published in the United States by Longfellow's own publishers, Ticknor and Fields—had already established a transatlantic model for using routine, long-term creative activity to help in the process of dealing with the loss of a loved one. Julia Straub points out that Tennyson thought of *In Memoriam* as "a kind of *Divina Commedia*" and mourned Hallam as "a male Beatrice"; a friend had written to Longfellow in 1845 that Tennyson intended to publish an elegy poem, "a kind of *Inferno* and *Paradise*."³⁶ Longfellow admired Tennyson's poem; he offered a quote from it as a source of comfort to a correspondent grieving

her husband (6:176). His translation could therefore no doubt be productively read in relationship to Tennyson's poem, if critics placed his work in a transatlantic Victorian context.

As Paul Giles, among others, has argued, relentless emphasis on the Civil War as an explanatory context unnecessarily directs attention to internal national division rather than to transnational movement and connection.³⁷ While a textual visit to hell may have been particularly fitting for a country wracked by civil war, other countries not experiencing such turmoil also produced *Divine Comedy* translations in the early 1860s, prompted by the celebration of Dante's 600th birthday in Florence in 1865. This event sparked international displays of scholarly prowess, a transatlantic context in which Longfellow was undoubtedly participating, however resonant the *Divine Comedy* may also have been in a national context.

Although the birthday anniversary functioned as a specific trigger for what Longfellow calls the "perfect deluge" of Dante translations in the 1860s, international interest in Dante had been growing for decades, in part due to the Victorian obsession with medievalism generally.³⁸ Norton situates his review of both English and U.S. Dante translations—including one by William Michael Rossetti, brother of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—in the context of the "interest in the life of the Middle Ages which has been so widely felt during the last fifty years, the zeal with which the study of medieval art and literature has been pursued."³⁹ As signaled by the appearance of Rossetti's translation at exactly the same moment that Longfellow began to produce his version, Dante and the period to which he so thoroughly gave voice had come into vogue on both sides of the Atlantic.

Again, national distinctions do not disappear in the context of transnational phenomena. Norton's review of Longfellow's translation judges Rossetti's version to be far inferior to Longfellow's and refers to Longfellow as Rossetti's "American competitor."⁴⁰ But even this statement of nationalistically tinged competition indicates Longfellow's (and Norton's) participation in a transatlantic literary scene: the first full U.S. translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* was deeply embedded in transatlantic literary networks and spheres of meaning.⁴¹

The inception and cultural orientation of Longfellow's Dante was significantly international in nature. Nevertheless the text assumed a more straightforwardly nationalist character over time. Less expensive editions

encouraged a wider readership, including those who had no connection to the elite transatlantic culture, to purchase Longfellow's translation.⁴² Thus although Longfellow's initial achievement can best be assessed within the context of transatlantic print culture, it did indeed later earn the kind of popular national attention that one might expect of "the first full American translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*."

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NOTES

I would like to thank Christopher Phillips of Lafayette College for sharing with me his unpublished research on Longfellow's Dante.

1. Colleen Glenney Boggs, *Transnationalism and American Literature: Literary Translation 1773–1892* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 119. The National Park Service's website for Longfellow's Cambridge home provides various fun facts at the bottom of each page. One of these "Did You Know?" blurbs reads: "In 1867, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow became the first American to complete a translation of Dante Alighieri's 'Inferno.'" See "History and Culture: Collections," Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/long/historyculture/collections.htm>, accessed January 6, 2010.

2. Longfellow's text reflected weekly translation workshops and "vigorous collaboration" with Dante Club colleagues Charles Eliot Norton, Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, George Washington Greene, and James T. Fields, of Longfellow's publishing firm, Ticknor and Fields. See Christoph Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 263. Norton especially seems to have reckoned himself something of a co-creator of the text. Norton donated a folder of "Scraps and Notes" to Harvard's Houghton Library that Longfellow had used in creating the translation. Norton actually annotated some of these scraps; in one example, on a Longfellow note discussing an aspect of Italian grammar, Norton writes that "In his transl. of *Inf.* XII.9 Mr. Longfellow has not adopted the negative significance, + is undoubtedly right in not doing so. C.E.N." ("Notes and Illustrative Passages for the *Divine Comedy*," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340, box 108, Houghton Library, Harvard University). Here Norton takes it upon himself to ratify Longfellow's translational choices, a clear sign of his own sense of enfranchisement in the creative process. On Norton, see John G. Sproat, *"The Best Men": Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); and Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

3. For two recent discussions of the history and current state of transatlantic literary studies, see Meredith McGill, "Introduction," *The Traffic in Poems: Nineteenth-Century Poetry and Transatlantic Exchange*, ed. Meredith L. McGill (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008): 1–2; and Laura M. Stevens, "Transatlanticism Now," *American Literary History* 16, no. 1 (2004): 93–102. For a variety of theoretical perspectives on the field, see Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor, eds., *Transatlantic Literary Studies: A Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

4. Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, ed. Matthew Pearl (New York: Modern Library, 2003). Pearl authored the 2003 *New York Times*–bestselling mystery novel *The Dante Club*, based on Longfellow and his friends.

5. See Werner Sollors, ed., *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); and Marc Shell and Werner Sollors, ed., *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

6. Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Italian Immigrant Press and the Construction of Social Reality, 1850–1920," in *Print Culture in a Diverse America*, ed. James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 20. During this period, Italian-language teaching in the United States remained scattered and generally available only to "the leading classes," especially through private educational institutions and female academies oriented toward "the attainment of refinement and the social graces." Bruno Roselli, *Italian Yesterday and Today: A History of Italian Teaching in the United States* (Boston: Stratford, 1935), 13; Joseph G. Fucilla, *The Teaching of Italian in the United States: A Documentary History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: American Association of Teachers of Italian, 1967), 259.

7. Dante Alighieri, *Opere poetiche di Dante Alighieri*, ed. Antonio Buttura (Paris, 1823). Longfellow's copy is in the collections of Harvard's Houghton Library. On Longfellow's personal Dante library, see J. Chesley Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," *ESQ* 62 (1971): 10–22, reprinted in this volume. One U.S. source for Italian books was the New York bookshop of Lorenzo da Ponte, who is often cited as the central figure in Italian-language instruction in early nineteenth-century New York and a proselytizer for Dante but who also worked to disseminate Italian books to U.S. libraries and readers. See Sheila Hodges, *Lorenzo da Ponte: The Life and Times of Mozart's Librettist* (New York: Universe Books, 1985), 181–205 passim; for Longfellow's connection to Da Ponte's bookshop, 205.

8. Charles Eliot Norton, "Dante, and His Latest English Translators," *North American Review* 103 (April 1866): 519. All subsequent parenthetical citations for Norton's article refer to this edition.

9. Michael Winship, "The Transatlantic Book Trade and Anglo-American Literary Culture in the Nineteenth Century," in *Reciprocal Influences: Literary Production, Distribution, and Consumption in America*, ed. Steven Fink and Susan S. Williams (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 99.

10. *Ibid.*, 104.

11. Nicholas Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 157. On Rich as "an agent for American libraries and collectors" and later specifically for Harper and Brothers, see also Eugene Exman, *The Brothers Harper: A Unique Publishing Partnership and Its Impact upon the Cultural Life of America from 1817 to 1853* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 38–39, 54.

12. For one helpful case study of how a library participated in the transatlantic book trade, although in a slightly earlier period, see James Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society, 1748–1811* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2002).

13. J. Chesley Mathews, "H. W. Longfellow's Interest in Dante," *Papers Presented at the Longfellow Commemorative Conference: April 1–3, 1982* (National Park Service, Longfellow National Historical Park) 47–58: 48, 47, 50. Some of Harvard Library's Dante holdings may have been procured by Longfellow himself. He and George Ticknor were each given \$1,000 by Harvard to obtain books for the library during their lengthy European travels. See Angelina La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage: A Historical Survey of Dante Studies in the United States, 1800–1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 41. On Longfellow's job as Bowdoin librarian, see Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 69. Calhoun notes that Bowdoin, during the period of Longfellow's tenure as a student and teacher there, was popularly regarded as "a citadel of reaction, a cultural bastion of the antidemocratic views of its Federalist and later Whig supporters" (72). Furthermore, he contrasts the Peucinian Society with the more Democratic-leaning Athenaeum Society on campus, of which Nathaniel Hawthorne was a member: these groups "were in essence fraternal organizations and tended to reflect the political views and social standing of the students' fathers. Henry Longfellow joined the older of the two, the Peucinian Society—more 'establishment,' a bit staid, properly Federalist (and later Whig) in its political leanings, both earnest and urbane in social tone" (36–37). On class privilege and the transatlantic affiliation with British culture at Harvard and other elite colleges during this period, see Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion, and Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 247–324.

14. On social libraries and athenaeums as institutions steeped in and dedicated to fostering class privilege, see Ronald Story, "Class and Culture in Boston: The Athenaeum, 1807–1860," *American Quarterly* 27:2 (1975): 178–199; and the essays in *Institutions of Reading: The Social Life of Libraries in*

the United States, ed. Thomas Augst and Kenneth Carpenter (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), in particular Michael A. Baenen's piece on the "elite preserve" of the Portsmouth Athenaeum, including its transatlantic acquisitions ("A Great and Natural Enemy of Democracy? Politics and Culture in the Antebellum Portsmouth Athenaeum," 72–98, esp. 92–93).

15. Mathews, "Longfellow's Interest," 50.

16. See, for example, the Boston historian William Hickling Prescott's work with Friedrich Wilhelm Lembke and Pascual de Gayangos to obtain needed materials from Spain. William Hickling Prescott, *The Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott, 1833–47*, ed. Roger Wolcott (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925); and William Hickling Prescott, *Unpublished Letters to Gayangos in the Library of the Hispanic Society of America*, ed. Clara Louisa Penney (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1927).

17. Kathleen Verduin, "Dante in America: The First Hundred Years," in *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America*, ed. Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 20. Verduin describes the New England elite's "cozy round of [Dante-related] lending and gift giving" and writes that "This network of transactions, at once personal and commercial, underlies also the integration of Dante reading into New England social patterns," and, I would add, the integration of New England social reading patterns into the transatlantic circulation of books.

18. Meredith L. McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 4, 3.

19. Norton, 517.

20. Verduin, "Dante in America," 21.

21. One key exception to this pattern is transatlantic shipping; to cross the ocean, all print materials had to travel through the considerably less privileged social space of packers, loaders, and sailors. See Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers*, 133–49; and Winship, "The Transatlantic Book Trade and Anglo-American Literary Culture," 103–4. Well-connected people could still circumvent this somewhat by getting their packages sent through ambassadorial channels, as when Longfellow instructs Charles Sumner to give *Inferno* to the Italian minister for transport to Italy. For an example of William Hickling Prescott debating the relative merits of commercial and diplomatic shipping routes, see Prescott, *Correspondence*, 61–2.

22. Lucy Delap and Maria DiCenzo, "Transatlantic Print Culture: The Anglo-American Feminist Press and Emerging 'Modernities,'" in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880–1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*, ed. Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 56.

23. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, ed. Andrew Hilen, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966–82), 5:153. All subsequent citations for Longfellow's correspondence refer to this edition.

24. Charles Eliot Norton, "Longfellow's Translation of the *Divine Comedy*," *North American Review* 105 (July 1867): 125.

25. Imscher, *Longfellow Redux*, 271.

26. John Fiske, *The Unseen World, and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1902), 324–25. Fiske's review was originally published in the *New York World*, 21 May, 22 June, 29 July, 1867.

27. Norton, "Longfellow's Translation of the *Divine Comedy*," 146.

28. Imscher objects to the interpretation that "Longfellow had finally decided to leave the average reader behind" with this translation, arguing that Dante's place as a populist icon among the people of Italy had inspired Longfellow to try to be the same for his own country: a "truly public American poet" (*Longfellow Redux*, 267–68). But in this case, Longfellow's populist aspirations seem not to have translated into a work ideally suited for the general reading public.

29. Verduin, "Dante in America," 33.

30. Norton, "Longfellow's Translation of the *Divine Comedy*," 124.

31. Ibid.

32. Quoted in Jeffrey D. Groves, "The Book Trade Transformed," in *Perspectives on American Book History: Artifacts and Commentary*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Joanne D. Chaison, and Jeffrey D. Groves (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 114–15.

33. See Newton Arvin, *Longfellow: His Life and Work* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 138–40; Irmischer, *Longfellow Redux*, 258, 272–3; La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage*, 97; Pearl, ed., *Inferno*, xiii; Verduin, "Dante in America," 29. Charles Calhoun labels the Fanny explanation "rather superficial," and argues instead for the importance of "the existence close at hand in Cambridge of a small group of literati who knew Italian well and took keen interest in his progress," namely the Dante Club (*Rediscovered Life*, 236).

34. Irmischer, *Longfellow Redux*, 258–60; La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage*, 114; Pearl, ed., *Inferno*, xvi.

35. Thomas J. Schlereth writes that elaborate Victorian American mourning practices "transformed a traditionally brief, personal, private drama of the everyday life cycle into a prolonged, ceremonial, public ritual"; *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876–1915* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), 293. For more on the culture of Victorian American mourning, see Mary Louise Kete, *Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-Class Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); and Martha V. Pike and Janice Gray Armstrong, eds., *A Time to Mourn: Expressions of Grief in Nineteenth Century America* (Stony Brook, N.Y.: Museums at Stony Brook, 1980).

36. Julia Straub, *A Victorian Muse: The Afterlife of Dante's Beatrice in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Continuum, 2009), 91, 101; John Olin Eidson, *Tennyson in America: His Reputation and Influence from 1827 to 1858* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1943), 74–5.

37. Paul Giles, "Transnationalism and Classic American Literature," *PMLA* 118 (2003): 74. Daniel Walker Howe points out that understanding U.S. culture in a Victorian context, bounded by the dates of Victoria's reign, 1837 to 1901, means "examin[ing] the era as a unit instead of respecting the conventional division of U.S. history at the Civil War." "Victorian Culture in America," in *Victorian America*, ed. Daniel Walker Howe ([Philadelphia]: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), 3.

38. On Victorian medievalism, see Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970); and Lorretta M. Holloway and Jennifer A. Palmgren, eds., *Beyond Arthurian Romances: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). On Dante and Victorian medievalism, see Kevin L. Morris, *The Image of the Middle Ages in Romantic and Victorian Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 200–201, 204.

39. Norton, "Dante, and His Latest English Translators," 509.

40. Norton, "Longfellow's Translation of the *Divine Comedy*," 138.

41. On rivalries and antagonisms as a constitutive facet of transatlantic literary culture, see Janet Beer and Bridget Bennett, eds., *Special Relationships: Anglo-American Affinities and Antagonisms 1854–1936* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

42. Verduin, "Dante in America," 33–34.

Longfellow's Dantean Imagination and the Volume of the World

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In one of the most memorable episodes of modernist condescension to a Victorian predecessor, Ludwig Lewisohn spat, "Who, except wretched schoolchildren, now reads Longfellow?"¹ Lewisohn himself may have faded from view, but his impression of Longfellow as a "schoolroom poet," fit solely for the gentle moral instruction of the young rather than the edification of those who know better, remains ours today. Longfellow's didacticism is now accepted fact, and most critics see it as an obstacle to the serious academic study of his poetry. Edward Wagenknecht has observed, "Neither Longfellow's 'sentimentalism' nor his didacticism is a very profitable subject for discussion now, for the modern rebellion against these tendencies in literature is too recent to permit us to approach the subject dispassionately."² By trying to protect Longfellow from the charges of thinking like a teacher, Wagenknecht actually hides from view one of the most significant forces that shaped Longfellow's writing, from his earliest essays in the 1830s to his late masterwork, his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*: a desire to provide a cosmopolitan education for his readers. In order to understand Longfellow's literary values and to appreciate the full force of his internationalist agenda, we must confront the matter of his didactic approach without hesitation. This matter is in fact a supremely "profitable" one, for it leads us to the heart of Longfellow's poetic enterprise. While Angela Sorby has investigated the ways in which Longfellow's poetry was taught in American classrooms, few critics have studied Longfellow himself as a teacher or explored the vital connection between his early professional life and his ongoing creative agenda.³ Longfellow was indeed a didactic poet, but

his desire to instruct his readers made him more of an innovator than an imitator. His pedagogical intentions led him not to reinforce literary convention but instead to throw open the field of national literature to influences from abroad and to create in his writings a progressive curriculum that could be followed by all, regardless of their place in American society.

Longfellow looked to Dante as a guide in his professional endeavors, both pedagogical and literary. A fixture of his college courses at Bowdoin and Harvard, Dante's *Commedia* provided Longfellow with a sublime image of divine textuality that tantalized and inspired him. If we trace the recurrence in Longfellow's works of Dante's ultimate image in *Paradiso* of the universe as one great book, Dante appears to be the engine that perpetually fires Longfellow's imagination. Dante's poetry encourages Longfellow to stretch the limits of antebellum United States culture to incorporate those world languages and literatures that many Americans considered extraneous to their narrow sense of national purpose. Longfellow holds up the comprehensive "volume of the world" as a literary ideal, and each of his books pays homage in some form to that imaginary work that comprehends all nations at once.⁴ By attending to the verbal and visual echoes of Dante's vision in Longfellow's prose writings, lectures, anthologies, and books of poetry, we can understand Dante not simply as the specific focus of Longfellow's translation project in the 1860s but rather as the constant intellectual companion and poetic mentor along the path of his own life's journey.

Longfellow's two decades of work as a professor of modern languages and literatures, first at Bowdoin and then at Harvard, established his position as a founder of American comparative literary studies. No one—not Ralph Waldo Emerson, or Margaret Fuller, or any other member of the scholarly transcendentalist circle—could approach Longfellow in his fluent knowledge of foreign languages or in his ability to translate poetry from a tremendous variety of national traditions. Along with George Ticknor and James Russell Lowell, who served before and after him in the Smith Professorship at Harvard, Longfellow transformed the study of modern languages and their national literatures from curricular addenda to training in Greek and Latin into serious academic subjects in their own right. He bridged the gap between an eighteenth-century mindset that

focused on the value of classical learning and a nineteenth-century awareness of European languages as living fields of cultural and political activity. Although many have interpreted Longfellow's orientation toward Europe as a sign of his cultural conservatism, the dramatic changes that he made to the American university curriculum align him with other educational reformers of the period, including Fuller, Bronson Alcott, and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, who stressed imaginative conversation as an alternative to rote learning. From 1829 to 1854, Longfellow developed his own poetic imagination in direct conversation with his scholarly efforts to break new ground in the study of French, Spanish, German, Italian, and Portuguese and his exploration of many other historically and nationally distinct literary traditions. In a cultural moment shaped by great cosmopolitan thinkers, Longfellow was a true Titan, and his professional role gave him the opportunity (as well as the burden) of carrying the entire world on his shoulders, as he imagined his intellectual model Goethe had done.⁵

Longfellow jump-started his academic career with three years of travel and study in Europe from 1826 to 1829. When he returned home to take up his position at Bowdoin, he began publishing work that reflected both his pedagogical theories and his literary values. The first material of this kind was a series of sketches titled "The Schoolmaster," which appeared in six installments in *The New-England Magazine* from 1831 to 1833. Longfellow introduced his protagonist as a "son of New-England," who like the poet himself had developed a "restless spirit" in the limiting round of village life.⁶ The schoolmaster describes his urge to travel abroad in literary terms, identifying himself with the "Cosmopolite" who believes that "the world is a kind of book, in which he who has seen his own country only, has read but one page." Not only does the schoolmaster prefer a cosmopolitan existence to a local one, a theme that Longfellow himself would elaborate in a satire of rural Brunswick, Maine, as seen through the eyes of a mysterious and worldly stranger, he imagines that he can take his journey abroad in the pages of a book.⁷ The schoolmaster's metaphor of the world as a book argues against the idea of a national literature, for his home country represents only "one page" among many, and the entire book is multinational in scope. After enumerating his travels, the schoolmaster closes "the volume of the world" and returns to his "Native Land" to take up his teaching duties.⁸ Although the emphasis of the piece shifts

to the schoolmaster's home country, his global "reading" continues to inform his sense of vocation.

Longfellow's schoolmaster may have had visions of national grandeur, but Longfellow himself had an even greater faith in the power wielded by educators and their institutions to shape national culture. During his postgraduate years abroad, Longfellow experienced an intellectual awakening at the University of Göttingen, and he wrote to his father of his desire to build a university in the United States upon a European model. According to Longfellow, universities should be seen as a nation's greatest sources of pride and its most reliable champions of cultural progress:

Germany and France may well boast of their schools and Universities. Good Heavens! what advantages have they not in these countries! Here indeed the gates of wisdom may be emphatically said to be swung wide open. There is a voice of free grace crying to all, that the fountains of their salvation are open. May it soon be heard in our own happy land, swelling above the voice of worldly gain, and the war of political strife.⁹

With the force of a jeremiad, Longfellow preaches the gospel of educational reform. In his mind, the university stands at the center of the nation and puts its democratic principles into action by promising "free" access to learning for "all" and leading the nation away from pernicious forms of greed and social unrest. Throughout his academic career, Longfellow would retain his belief in the importance of openness and accessibility of literary knowledge in both his university courses and his published works.

Longfellow's vision of what a university could be offered a cosmopolitan alternative to national organizations. "Next to our own free government," he exclaimed, "I think the University of Paris the sublimest of all human institutions!" The resources of Longfellow's open campus would be comprehensive, and its libraries would contain "books in foreign languages as well as in the vernacular" (*Letters*, 1:303). By insisting on an international range of library acquisitions, Longfellow began his life's work of introducing American audiences to foreign literatures. Longfellow himself would function as the "nucleus" of his own imaginary university, insisting that his student-readers set aside their prejudices against European writing and recognize its substantial cultural value (*Letters*, 1:301). From the beginning, Longfellow saw himself as an active reformer, and the opposition that he encountered from actual university administrators and other critics throughout his public career demonstrates

the extent to which he stretched not only the limits of American higher education but issued an even more significant challenge to Americans' understanding of their nation's place in the world (*Letters*, 1:300).¹⁰

As Longfellow contended in his earliest statements on education, the work of the professor in an open, European-style university was a form of inherently progressive political action that had larger implications for a nation's cultural development. Longfellow's efforts to promote multilingual learning to a wider audience were considered radical in the 1830s and 1840s, and they got him into constant political trouble within the walls of the university itself. Carl L. Johnson has observed that Longfellow's career as Smith Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard, a post that he held from 1837 to 1854, involved just as much negotiating with a recalcitrant administration as it did teaching.¹¹ Although his initial duties included lecturing to members of the university on "the languages and literature of Modern Europe or Belles Lettres," Longfellow quickly became frustrated by the administration's assumption that he was merely a language instructor and not a public intellectual.¹² He clashed with the Harvard Corporation over their stubborn refusal to relieve him of the extra French language teaching that had begun to interfere with his scholarly ambitions. In his journal, Longfellow commented, "Lecturing is all well enough, and in my history is an evident advance upon the past. But now one of my French teachers is gone; and this dragooning of school-boys in lessons is like going backward."¹³ Longfellow had been driven to leave Bowdoin by his "strong desire to tread on a stage on which I can take longer strides and speak to a larger audience," but even at Harvard, he struggled to "advance" in his project of pushing his field beyond the practices of rote learning.¹⁴

In an attempt to promote his course of literary lectures, Longfellow asked for the use of either the "Chapel or . . . the Philosophical Room" so that he could draw a wider audience from both the Harvard and Cambridge communities.¹⁵ His usual rooms in University Hall were often cramped and "miserable," and he complained of their physical constraints. In one room, there were "windows behind me and behind my audience, so that I could not see them nor they me. I had as lief lecture through a key-hole."¹⁶ The Corporation rejected his plea for more space. Nonetheless, Longfellow attempted to make his lectures public events. In an 1838 letter to his father, he elaborates, "By public I mean free to any and every

one who chooses to attend, whether in college or out of college.” Longfellow contends that the university should merge with the city itself and its intellectual resources should become the common property of all. His educational views were far more “democratic” than those of his predecessor Ticknor, and he encountered constant difficulties in his attempts to persuade a “conservative” administration to take his expansive pedagogical ambitions seriously.¹⁷

Longfellow’s struggle for recognition as a scholar of the people led him to channel his academic energies into his writing. During his years at Bowdoin, he blurred the line between his scholarly articles and his creative prose, and in his quasi-autobiographical novel *Hyperion: A Romance* (1839), he transferred his teaching strategies to a printed text that would be accessible to a wider reading public.¹⁸ Longfellow’s “Records of Harvard Classes” show that he lectured annually on Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Goethe’s *Faust* and frequently on comparative topics such as “Literature and Literary Life” and “Modern Languages and their Literatures.”¹⁹ Prioritizing accessibility over interpretive complexity, Longfellow summarized difficult texts, translated them into English for the benefit of his students, and brought their attention to passages that revealed the “design” of a particular work.²⁰ In the spirit of his promise to reach willing listeners, “whether in college or out of college,” Longfellow inserted into the narrative of *Hyperion* a series of meditations on the “Lives of Literary Men” that had originally been presented in an 1838 lecture course (*Prose*, 2:8). In his own writing, therefore, Longfellow was able both to capitalize on his academic reputation and to circumvent the restrictions placed on him by Harvard in order to contribute to the general education of the entire nation.

Like the first of Longfellow’s travel books, *Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea* (1833–1835), *Hyperion* reveals itself early on to be a pedagogical experiment, intended to teach readers how to appreciate German culture and such significant authors as Goethe, Richter, and Hoffmann. The dialogues between the fictional Paul Flemming and his companions—a German Baron, an English eccentric, and a young Englishwoman named Mary Ashburton (whom many critics compare to Longfellow’s wife Fanny Appleton)—forsake character development in favor of literary instruction. In this book, Longfellow uses lecture techniques from his college classroom as he summarizes German literary history for his readers. He introduces the figure of the “philosophical Professor,” who captivates

Flemming as he explicates a passage from Goethe's *Faust* (*Prose*, 2:98, 102–3). Longfellow's lectures on specific national literatures often followed the French model of an *explication du texte*, and in this instance Longfellow recreates the dynamics of the Harvard lecture hall as he attempts to share widely the literary lessons that the university preferred to restrict to an elite audience.²¹ Flemming proves himself a particularly receptive student by following the example of the Professor in his conversations with the fetching Mary Ashburton. Flemming's "lectures" on German literature include impromptu translations of poems into English, a practice that Longfellow had mastered in his Harvard classes. "I will improvise a translation for your own particular benefit," Flemming boasts to his companion (*Prose*, 2:182). In this moment, the line between lectures as academic exercises and lectures as literary performances seems especially thin.

Longfellow's desire to turn his readers into avid consumers of foreign literatures also shaped his first book of poems, *Voices of the Night* (1839), which reveals its pedagogical roots when read as a companion to *Hyperion*. Longfellow published some of his most well-known poems in *Voices of the Night*—"Hymn to the Night," "A Psalm of Life," and "The Spirit of Poetry"—but he included alongside them three passages from Dante's *Purgatorio* first translated for his Harvard lectures, among other translated poems.²² These translations are seldom associated with Longfellow's own poetry, for in collections of Longfellow's works his translations are normally separated from the poems that they originally complemented and placed in a section of their own. Although Longfellow himself approved this separation in many of his books, these later editorial decisions run counter to Longfellow's sense of his translations as literary accomplishments in their own right, and they obscure the origins of his own poetry in his teaching of foreign literatures. By distinguishing foreign from "American" material, modern editors have replayed the literary nationalist drama that Longfellow so fervently opposed. In his epilogue to *Voices of the Night*, titled "L'Envoi," Longfellow carefully integrates his translations with the rest of his poems. He calls attention to the multilingual nature of the book as he evokes "Tongues of the dead, not lost, / But speaking from death's frost, / Like fiery tongues at Pentecost!"²³ Longfellow imagines his volume of poetry not as a monolingual, monocultural effort but rather as a collection that speaks in different national "tongues" and invokes a "Pentecost" that spreads the spirit of poetry to all corners

of the globe. As Christoph Irmscher has noted, Longfellow admired Dante for his similar Pentecostal power, as his readers miraculously “hear thy wondrous word” each “in their own language.”²⁴

Longfellow’s vision of *Voices of the Night* as a gathering of world poetry anticipates his work of anthologizing poems from multiple nations in his books of the 1840s and the 1870s. Instead of illuminating one particular national literature for the benefit of nonacademic readers, Longfellow attempted in his anthologies to offer representative samplings of many poetic cultures at once. In his preface to *The Poets and Poetry of Europe* (1845), the most widely circulated of these anthologies, Longfellow provides an internationalist answer to Rufus Griswold’s nationalist project *The Poets and Poetry of America* (1842).²⁵ Longfellow makes explicit his goal of “bring[ing] together, in a compact and convenient form, as large an amount as possible of those English translations which are scattered through many volumes, and are not easily accessible to the general reader.”²⁶ By emphasizing “accessibil[ity],” Longfellow signals that the volume is a pedagogical enterprise. “In doing this,” he adds, “it has been thought advisable to treat the subject historically, rather than critically.” Longfellow claims that he does not have a “critical” agenda for the volume but implies that simply reading the poems themselves will teach readers valuable lessons about European cultures. Yet his use of the word “scattered” reveals Dante’s subtle influence on the direction of Longfellow’s own project. In the verses that Longfellow repeatedly encountered in his teaching and would reinterpret two decades later in his translation of Dante’s *Paradiso*, Dante describes his vision of the ultimate book that has “bound up with love together in one volume / What through the universe in leaves is scattered.”²⁷ By echoing Dante’s phrasing in his own preface, Longfellow signals to the attentive reader the similar tenor of his own imagination.

In her review of the anthology, transcendentalist Margaret Fuller both defended and dismissed Longfellow for his repeated episodes of borrowing material from other writers. She was quick to recognize the value of Longfellow’s gathering of poetic examples from European sources, for she shared his pedagogical agenda and used her editorial positions at *The Dial* and the *New-York Tribune* to persuade her readers to read and to appreciate European literatures. Fuller identifies Longfellow correctly as a “teacher to the people” and observes that his writings and translations could educate what she considered an unsophisticated public.²⁸ Despite their

instructive potential, however, Fuller claims that Longfellow's books merely reproduce the contents of a library instead of evoking the expansive elements of nature. His volumes of poetry are "hot-house bouquets," effeminate and showy in contrast to "the free beauty of nature."²⁹ In the midst of her nationalist commentary, Fuller seizes upon a truth of Longfellow's composition; his anthologies such as *The Poets and Poetry of Europe* were in fact miniaturized versions of his own literary collections. Like the chapters of that particular anthology, his books were catalogued by national origin on the many bookshelves at Craigie House. In *Hyperion*, Longfellow portrays a writer's library as a tool for comprehending the complexities of the world rather than sequestering himself away from them. Flemming observes that the poet "has his Rome, his Florence, his whole glowing Italy, within the four walls of his library. He has in his books the ruins of an antique world,—and the glories of a modern one,—his Apollo and Transfiguration" (*Prose*, 2:66). Through Flemming's description of the library as an imaginative space of international breadth as well as historical depth, Longfellow contradicts Fuller's claim that books provide only forced versions of events in the natural world.

Longfellow continued to expand the global range of his anthologies, moving outward from European poetry in the 1840s to world literature in *Poems of Places* (1876–1879). His final anthology catalogues geographically specific poems from multiple nations and continents in its thirty-one volumes. This massive effort has been largely overlooked by scholars, but in comparison to other nineteenth-century poetry anthologies, including Wordsworth's *Poems on the Naming of Places* (1800) and Emerson's *Parnassus* (1874), Longfellow's project emerges as distinctive in its tremendous ambition to contain a Goethean *Weltliteratur* within a single Dantean volume.³⁰ While Wordsworth's book is defiantly local, in keeping with his emphasis on folklore in *Lyrical Ballads*, Longfellow's casts local particularities as global phenomena that belong to every place and people. Emerson's *Parnassus* is most often noted for its failure to include any poems by Whitman, whose *Leaves of Grass* Emerson judged "the most extraordinary piece of wit & wisdom that America has yet contributed."³¹ But in its exclusion of all poetry from outside the Anglo-American tradition, Emerson's anthology throws into relief the audacity and the amplitude of Longfellow's multinational project.

Longfellow's faith in both literary nationality and nation-based cosmopolitanism was rooted in his admiration for Goethe and Dante, with whom

he felt particular transhistorical as well as transnational affinity. Longfellow devoted more time in his Harvard lectures to both Goethe and Dante than to any other writers, and he spent many years on his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, an endeavor that combined artistic enrichment with pedagogical purpose. Dante's ambition to take account of the entire globe in one multivolume work surely influenced Longfellow in the compilation of his poetic anthologies as well as the composition of his less successful tripartite epic *Christus: A Mystery* (1872).

As he introduces Dante to the readers of *The Poets and Poetry of Europe*, Longfellow borrows phrases that he had first used in his Dante lectures at Harvard.³² He celebrates Dante's ability to evoke the entirety of divine knowledge in literary form, as he reflects, "Upon this slender golden thread hangs this universe of a poem; in which things visible and invisible have their appointed place, and the spheres and populous stars revolve harmonious about their centre."³³ While Dante had mastered the vernacular of his "nation," or rather, his Tuscan region, his greatest achievement in Longfellow's eyes is his use of that language to capture in poetry the vast expanse of the "visible and invisible" universe. The physical and spiritual order of that universe also seeps into Longfellow's poetry, which was remarkably "harmonious" in its mastery of versification: a measured Dantean practice that Longfellow valued but that frequently exasperated more impatient modern readers, who interpreted metrical regularity as a sign of a writer's limited, conservative imagination.

Dante showed Longfellow the ways in which literature could become universal by illuminating a broad range of emotional and religious feeling. Lino Pertile has observed that Longfellow's translation of the *Divine Comedy* was ultimately an act of literary devotion and personal redemption rather than another effort in the service of didactic ends.³⁴ Even Longfellow's early lectures on Dante had been in some sense acts of devotion, for as he told his students, "I lay . . . [my hand] upon . . . [the poem] with reverence; indeed with so great reverence, that it amounts almost to unwillingness."³⁵ In his sonnets on the process of translating the *Divine Comedy*, Longfellow displays tremendous humility, casting himself in the role of supplicant in the "cathedral" of Dante's imagination.³⁶ Longfellow's focus in these sonnets is not the national character of Dante's work, but rather its roots in universal human experiences of "agonies," "exultations," "despair," "tenderness," and "hate." No longer a teacher instructing willing listeners through the medium of literature, Longfellow is

himself a student of Dante's poetic skill and a believer in his "miracle of song."

Longfellow writes admiringly of the capaciousness of the *Divine Comedy* and repeatedly echoes Dante's ultimate image in *Paradiso* of God as the great text of the "universe" in which all elements are "legato con amore in un volume" (*Par.* 33.86), or in Longfellow's translation, "Bound up with love together in one volume."³⁷ When he reaches that generative passage in his translation of Dante's final volume, he joins Dante in celebrating the discovery of literary truth. As he shares Dante's vision with his own readers, Longfellow rejoices:

I saw that in its depth far down is lying,
Bound up with love together in one volume,
What throughout the universe in leaves is scattered;
Substance, and accident, and their operations,
All interfused together in such wise
That what I speak of is one simple light.

In this scene, all of Longfellow's pedagogical and literary efforts are likewise "interfused together." His version of Dante's image, which brings together the constituent parts of the universe as though they are tangible "leaves" of one great, divinely authored book, restores order to a world that has struggled to comprehend its own meaning.³⁸ Like Dante, Longfellow helps his readers interpret this fundamental text by combining into single volumes the places, the voices, and the stories that animate distinctive world literary traditions. In each of these books individually, and in all of his books combined, Longfellow undertakes this labor of "love." The result, which can only be perceived toward the very end of this Dantean journey, is illumination. At the close of *Paradiso*, Dante speaks of "l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle" (in Longfellow's words, "The Love which moves the sun and the other stars").³⁹ By following the pattern of Dante's influence on Longfellow's literary career, we come to know more intimately the deep love that Longfellow had for his poetic mentor, and we also understand why we are equally moved by the power of Longfellow's own imagination.

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NOTES

1. Ludwig Lewisohn, *The Story of American Literature* (New York: Modern Library, 1939), 65.
2. Edward Wagenknecht, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: His Poetry and Prose* (New York: Ungar, 1986), 27.
3. See Angela Sorby, *Schoolroom Poets: Childhood, Performance, and the Place of American Poetry, 1865–1917* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005), 1–34. An early exception to this rule of critical focus on Longfellow as text rather than teacher in the American schoolroom is Carl L. Johnson, *Professor Longfellow of Harvard* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1944).
4. For a study of the literal and figurative implications of Dante's image of this "volume," see Giuseppe Mazzotta, "Cosmology and the Kiss of Creation (*Paradiso* 27–29)," *Dante Studies* 123 (2005): 1–21.
5. Longfellow, *Hyperion: A Romance* (1839) in *The Prose Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1886), 2:121. The book's hero, Paul Flemming, hears his friend the Baron describe Goethe in these terms: "He stands like Atlas, as Claudian has painted him in the Battle of the Giants, holding the world aloft upon his head, the ocean-streams hard frozen in his hoary locks." Subsequent references to this source are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically as *Prose*.
6. Longfellow, "The Schoolmaster," *New-England Magazine* 1 (1831): 27.
7. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 75. Calhoun has situated Longfellow's relatively unknown story "The Wondrous Tale of a Little Man in Gosling Green," published by Horace Greeley in *The New-Yorker* in 1834, in the context of his teaching years at Bowdoin. In Longfellow's satire, Brunswick became "Bungonuck," a small town with narrow-minded inhabitants.
8. Longfellow, "The Schoolmaster," 28.
9. Longfellow to Stephen Longfellow, March 10, 1829, in *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, ed. Andrew W. Hilen (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966–1982), 1:300. Subsequent references to this source are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically as *Letters*. See also Calhoun, *Longfellow*, 69.
10. *Ibid.*, 71–72. Calhoun calls Longfellow's educational agenda "strikingly progressive."
11. Johnson, *Professor Longfellow*, vi.
12. *Ibid.*, 24, 36.
13. Samuel Longfellow, ed., *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from his Journals and Correspondence* (Boston, 1891), 1:307.
14. *Ibid.*, 1:204.
15. Johnson, *Professor Longfellow*, 28.
16. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 1:297.
17. Johnson, *Professor Longfellow*, 88, vi.
18. Matthew Gartner, "Becoming Longfellow: Work, Manhood, and Poetry," *American Literature* 72.1 (2000): 70. Gartner investigates the connections between the cultural lessons taught in *Hyperion* and Longfellow's efforts to justify the pursuit of his literary vocation in a culture skeptical of creative work.
19. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (4), Houghton Library, Harvard University.
20. Longfellow, "Life of Goethe—Lectures and notes" (1837), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (49).
21. Johnson, *Professor Longfellow*, 87.
22. Wagenknecht, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 221.
23. Longfellow, *Voices of the Night*, 5th ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1841), 144.
24. Christoph Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 276. These quotations come from one of Longfellow's sonnets on the process of translating Dante's *Divine Comedy*. See Longfellow, *The Writings of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Cambridge, Mass., 1886), 11:10.

25. Kirsten Silva Gruesz discusses Longfellow's anthology as an explicit effort to counteract Griswold's literary nationalism, which Longfellow himself explains in an 1843 letter to his German writer friend Ferdinand Freiligrath. See Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 82–83.
26. Longfellow, *The Poets and Poetry of Europe* (Philadelphia, 1845), v.
27. Longfellow, *Writings*, 11:161.
28. Review of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poems* (10 December 1845) in *Margaret Fuller, Critic: Writings from the "New-York Tribune," 1844–1846*, ed. Judith Mattson Bean and Joel Myerson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 286, 291.
29. *Ibid.*, 292.
30. Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture*, 83–84. Although Gruesz recognizes this anthology as a significant project, I disagree with her claim that its volumes map out a “colonial itinerary” for Anglo-American readers.
31. Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1996), 1350.
32. Longfellow, “Lectures on Dante” (1838), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (106).
33. Longfellow, *The Poets and Poetry of Europe*, 514.
34. See Pertile's introduction to Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Longfellow, ed. Matthew Pearl (New York: Modern Library, 2003), xviii.
35. Longfellow, “Lectures on Dante” (1838), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (106).
36. Pertile, Introduction to Dante, *Inferno*, xxxi–xxxii.
37. See Dante, *Le opere di Dante Alighieri*, vol. 7.4, ed. Giorgio Petrocchi (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1967), 552; and Longfellow, *Writings*, 11:161.
38. Longfellow's decision to add the word “leaves” to Dante's original phrase “ciò che per l'universo si squaderna” (*Par.* 33.87) highlights his interest in the concrete textuality of the image.
39. Longfellow, *Writings*, 11:163.

The Seed of the Stately Tree: Longfellow and Dante at Bowdoin College

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Much of the literature about Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's connection to Dante Alighieri prior to his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* focuses on Longfellow's years as the professor of belles lettres at Harvard University. Harvard claims a rightful spot as the place where Longfellow's interest in the Italian poet flourished, but the question remains, What piqued that interest? When and where was it born, and how did it grow before it came to fruition in the fertile environment of Harvard and the cities of Boston and Cambridge?

Considering Longfellow's days as a Bowdoin College student, European traveler, and Bowdoin professor shows a great deal about his developing interest in Dante and the Italian language. Through its Peucinian Society library and its decision to send Longfellow to Europe to master Romance languages, Bowdoin should be credited with first fostering Longfellow's interest in Italian literature and in Dante. As a professor, Longfellow shared his passion for languages and comparative literature with his students and began to identify with Dante himself, specifically the poet in exile. Though Longfellow did not teach a formal class devoted entirely to Dante while at Bowdoin, he incorporated the poet's work into his language classes, which led to Bowdoin's being the second college in the United States, after Harvard, to teach both Italian and Dante.¹ He incorporated the poet into numerous Italian lectures and even his inaugural address as professor of modern languages. Indeed, Longfellow presented his thoughts on the *Comedy* to a Bowdoin audience years before he began teaching at Harvard.

Though Harvard is credited with introducing Dante to an American collegiate, it is worth looking at Longfellow's time at Bowdoin, the lectures of his predecessor George Ticknor at Harvard, and Longfellow's overall success in introducing Dante at Harvard to assess Harvard's claims to this precedent. Angelina La Piana, who compiled a historical survey of Dante studies in America, notes that Harvard did not offer a specific class on Dante until 1831, when "Italian had gained some ground."² This was in fact *after* Longfellow began teaching Italian and introducing Dante into his lectures at Bowdoin. Though Ticknor took up his post at Harvard in 1819, he was not able to introduce a dedicated Dante course until twelve years later. Longfellow had more success at Bowdoin, teaching Dante in a course on Italian literature almost immediately after arriving at the college as a professor.

In addition, Longfellow's youth, facility at mastering foreign languages, and energy for teaching those languages and their literatures led to his success in revolutionizing how Romance languages were taught at the university level. As we shall see, Longfellow's personality, talents, and passion let him succeed where Ticknor could not. Bowdoin planted the seed for what would blossom at Harvard. To Longfellow, Dante's poem was in fact "a stately tree which lords it over the landscape, and no one is willing to sit still in its shadow, but all must need to cut their names on the bark with penknives."³ As we know, Longfellow's growth, and that of Dante studies in America, was immense in the shade of the poem.

Longfellow as a Bowdoin Student

Longfellow enrolled at Bowdoin in 1821, at the age of fourteen. Although he wanted to go to Harvard at that early age, his family insisted on sending him to college closer to his Portland home. What is more, his paternal grandfather was one of Bowdoin's founders, and Longfellow's father, Stephen, was a trustee.⁴ Some scholars hold that Stephen Longfellow had copies of Henry Boyd and Henry Cary's translations of the *Divine Comedy*—the first complete translations of the entire poem into English—in his home library. Only one scholar, Emilio Goggio, asserts that Longfellow read these translations and developed his interest in Dante then.⁵ Given that not much of Stephen Longfellow's library has survived, and we do not have evidence of Longfellow having read Dante there, it

is a difficult theory to prove. According to the accounts of Samuel Longfellow, Henry's brother and biographer, their father's library, which was "not large, but well selected for the time, gave him, as he grew up, access to Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Dryden, Thomson, Goldsmith; the *Spectator*, the *Rambler*, the *Lives of the Poets*, *Rasselas*, Plutarch's *Lives*; Hume's, Gibbon's, Gillies's and Robertson's *Histories*, and the like."⁶ There is no mention of Dante in Stephen's library. In fact, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana—Longfellow's grandson—wrote that it was "doubtful" Longfellow came upon the *Divine Comedy* at so early in age; rather, he likely cultivated his love for Italy by reading the English poets, who "constantly evoked echoes of Italy."⁷

At Bowdoin, however, there are more probable circumstances in which Longfellow could have encountered Boyd and Cary's translations of the *Divine Comedy*. Longfellow joined the literary Peucinian Society (rival of the Athenian Society, which classmate Nathaniel Hawthorne joined), not only out of his love of literature but also for the opportunities that the Society's library offered, especially that of cataloguing the library.

Longfellow came by the position after a fire in Maine Hall damaged the Peucinian collection and generous donations were given to create the new library. Longfellow was appointed to serve on the committee that would compile the new catalog,⁸ and he became one of the Society's librarians on July 18, 1823, at the age of seventeen. This is perhaps when and where he first came across Dante's *Divine Comedy* in its entirety. Longfellow likely heard Dante's name before this (Keats and Shelley, for example, mention the poet in their work), but it is possible that this is first time Longfellow read, or at least skimmed, the *Divine Comedy* itself. The catalog he composed as a student (fig. 1) lists Boyd's translation as being present in the library (fig. 2). J. Chesley Mathews claims that Cary's translation was also in the Peucinian Library,⁹ but there is no evidence of this in Bowdoin's libraries today. Worthy of note is that in the 1821 publication of the *Catalogue of the Library of Bowdoin College* there is an interleaf in Longfellow's handwriting in which Perticari and Monti's 1825 edition of the *Commedia* is listed (fig. 3). On the upper wrapper to each volume of the edition we can see Longfellow's inscription: "Library of Bowdoin College" (fig. 4). The interleaved notation and inscription were made well after Longfellow was graduated, however, subsequent to his return to Bowdoin in 1829 to assume the positions of professor and college librarian.

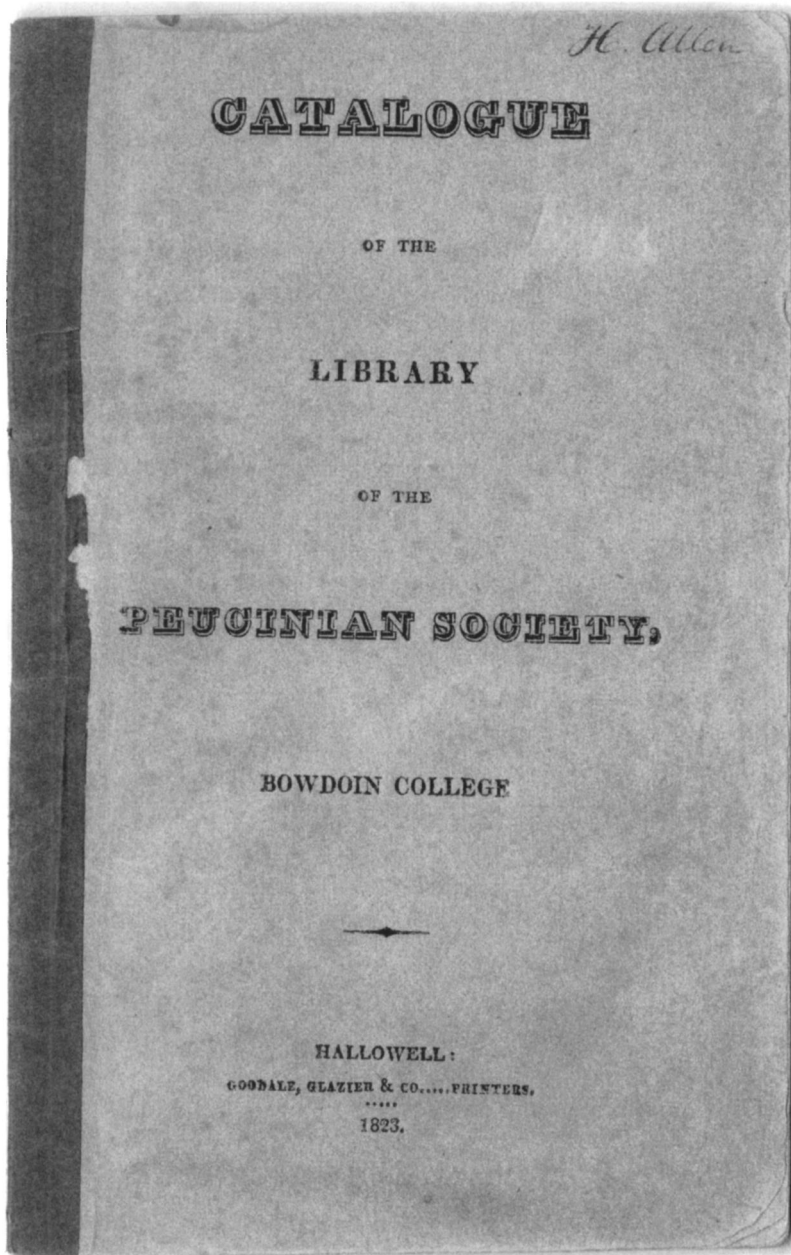


Figure 1: Title page of the *Catalogue of the Library of the Peucinian Society, Bowdoin College* (Hallowell: Goodale, Glazier & Co., 1823). [PS: L853 C38 1823 c.2]. Courtesy the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

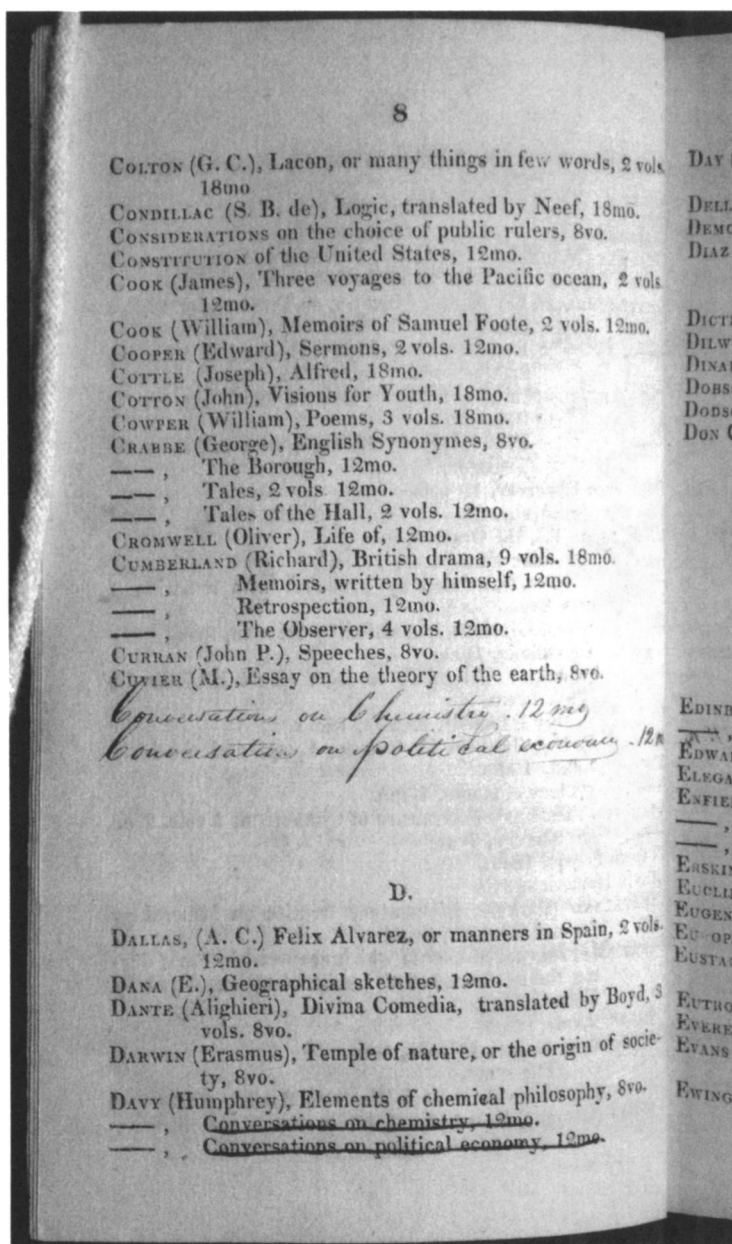


Figure 2: Henry Boyd's translation of the *Commedia* listed in the *Catalogue of the Library of the Peucinian Society, Bowdoin College* (Hallowell: Goodale, Glazier & Co., 1823), p. 8. Bowdoin College Archives [PS: L853 C38 1823 c.2]. Courtesy the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

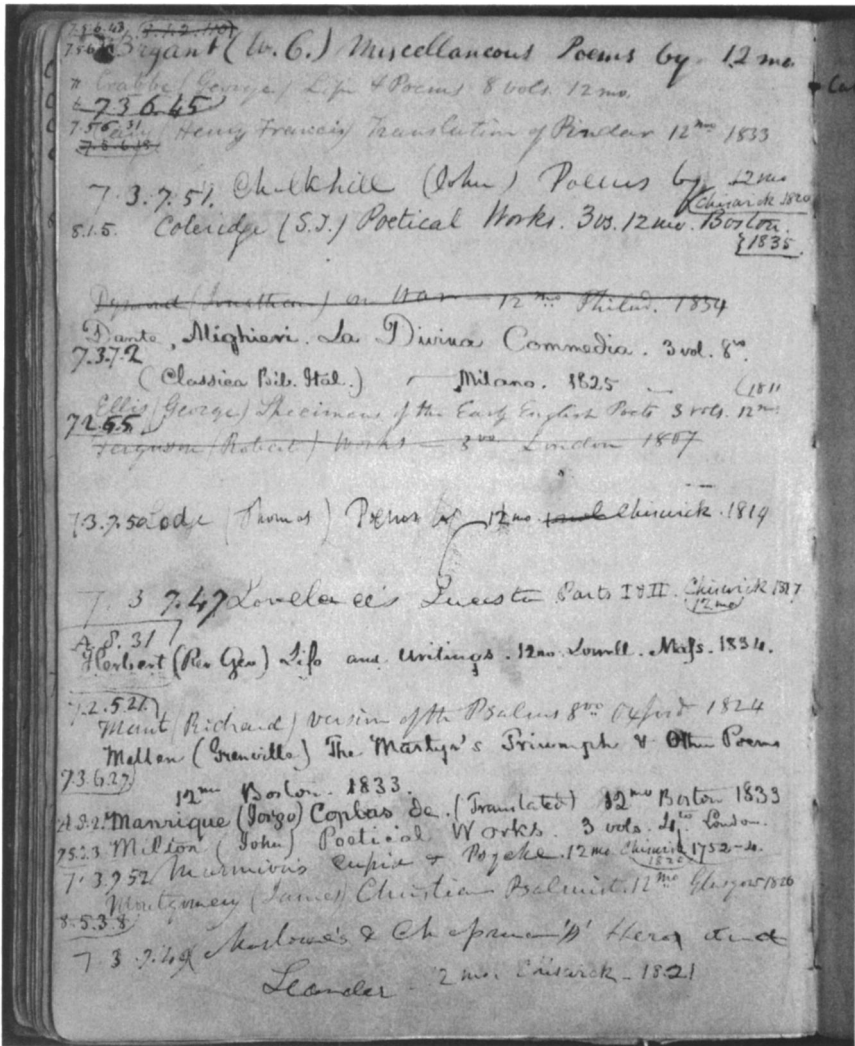


Figure 3: Interleaf in the *Catalogue of the Library of Bowdoin College, in Brunswick, Maine* (Brunswick: Joseph Griffin, 1821), inserted p. [6] following p. 74. Bowdoin College Library Archives [5.1.1 v.7 c.2]. Courtesy the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

As a student, Longfellow was quite an avid reader. In a letter to his mother dated October 19, 1823, he wrote:

I am reading three or four books at a time—sometimes more! A very foolish way of improving, or rather of wasting time, you will think. I know it—but when a

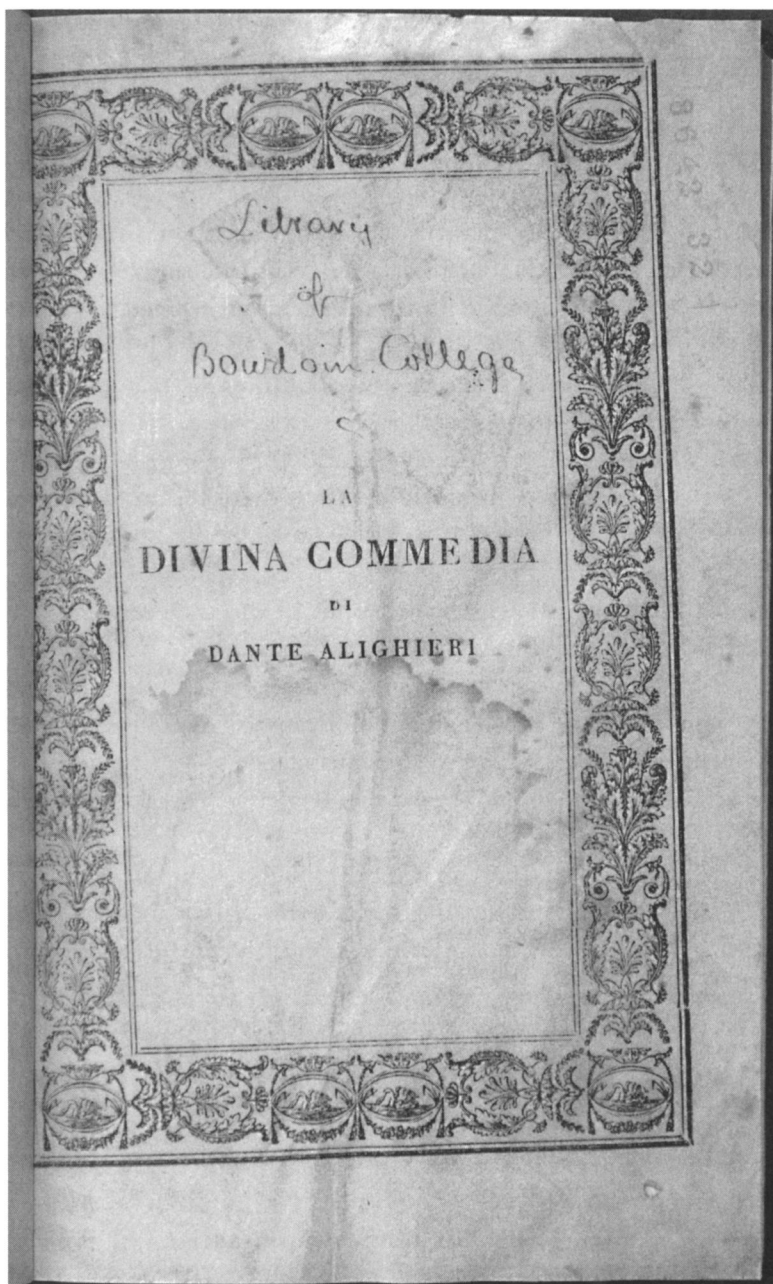


Figure 4: Inscription in Longfellow's hand on the upper wrapper of vol. 3 of Dante, *La Divina Commedia*, ed. G. Perticari and V. Monti (Milan: N. Bettoni, 1825) 3 vols. Bowdoin College Library Archives [PQ4302.E25 v.3]. Courtesy the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

volume grows tedious and uninteresting, I choose rather to lay it aside, than to weary my patience by poring over sleepy pages in such a manner as to derive neither advantage nor amusement.¹⁰

During Longfellow's time at as a college student no modern foreign languages were taught at Bowdoin; nor were foreign languages taught at his high school, the Portland Academy. He decided to begin studying French with Charles Nolcini in Portland when classmate and friend Patrick Henry Greenleaf suggested it. But learning Italian seemed to become a particular obsession for the young Longfellow. Before graduating from Bowdoin, he expressed a desire to study Italian rather than continue his study in French. He told his father in a December 1824 letter, "The French I mean to understand pretty thoroughly before I leave College" (*Letters*, 1:94). Longfellow planned for his study of Italian to be in conjunction with a study in history and literature, specifically with George Ticknor, Harvard's first professor of belles lettres, who began teaching Italian at Harvard in 1819. He wrote to his father on December 5, 1824, "I want to spend one year at Cambridge [Massachusetts] for the purpose of reading History, and of becoming familiar with the best authors in polite literature; whilst at the same time I can be acquiring a knowledge of the Italian language, without an acquaintance with which I shall be shut out from one of the most beautiful departments of letters" (*Letters*, 1:94).

Longfellow finally did meet Ticknor through a friend in Portland, the Hon. Charles S. Daveis, who had studied law in Boston with Ticknor. Ticknor soon became a mentor for the young scholar and would eventually begin grooming him as his successor. When Longfellow had completed his undergraduate degree, Bowdoin decided to establish a Modern Language Department (the fourth in the country after William and Mary, Harvard, and the University of Virginia) and to send Longfellow to Europe to train to be its first professor.

Longfellow as a European Traveler

According to Thompson, it was at the 1825 commencement that Bowdoin's governing body voted to establish a Chair of Modern Languages and offer Longfellow the professorship. Longfellow was only eighteen at the time and had studied only French, so the trustees wanted him to

prepare for the position by studying in Europe for a few years, at his own (or rather, his father's) expense.¹¹ Stephen Longfellow had previously wanted his son to study law, as he had done, and did not see a career in letters as viable. But when Bowdoin presented the opportunity for a professorship, Stephen went along with it, as it would provide his son with a good career and one that suited him.

Historian Calhoun, however, does not agree with Thompson's assessment as to how Longfellow got the job. With regard to Longfellow's translation of Horace that supposedly impressed trustee Benjamin Orr, Calhoun writes that "this is improbable on several grounds. Given the curricular war within the early nineteenth-century colleges—between the traditionalists who championed Latin and Greek and the reformers who sought a more useful curriculum—skill at translating a classical poet would not have recommended anyone to the advocates of teaching modern languages."¹² Also, Longfellow had yet to demonstrate "any special abilities at modern languages beyond the veneer of French expected of every genteel young person."¹³ Perhaps the main reason behind Stephen Longfellow's financial backing of the tour was that no college "as financially insecure as Bowdoin [was] likely to 'send' anyone abroad, least of all a nineteen-year-old aspiring man of letters."¹⁴ Calhoun also holds that Longfellow's father likely had a role in creating the professorship for his son. From Calhoun's perspective, the focus rests more on Longfellow's father's relationship with the board of trustees than his son's talent in modern languages, which was as yet unproved.

Yet Longfellow must have demonstrated some linguistic ability for both his father and the college to risk placing the Modern Language Department in his hands at such a young age. The task of creating a department and verbally agreeing to give Longfellow the professorship seems too large to base on Stephen Longfellow's influence alone. Calhoun acknowledges that Stephen's sponsorship of Longfellow rested on two premises: "that the college was serious about funding such a professorship of languages and that Henry was clever enough to master French and Spanish and possibly Italian well enough to be able to teach them. There were, after all, very few Americans who could claim that degree of knowledge."¹⁵

With the blessings of his father and Bowdoin, Longfellow began his travels through France, Spain, Italy, and Germany. He finally had the opportunity to study Italian. He began before even arriving in Italy, taking

lessons in Paris during the winter of 1826–1827 from a music teacher named Ferranti.¹⁶ While in Italy, where he spent a full year and the largest part of his European travels, Longfellow's familiarity with Dante and the *Divine Comedy* is documented in his journals and letters. It was Longfellow's good friend George Washington Greene who gave him a copy of the *Divine Comedy* in Italian on April 11, 1828. Dana describes it as a three-volume piece translated by Antonio Buttura in 1820, with "a portrait of Dante as a frontispiece and at the beginning of the three volumes engraved plans of the Inferno, the Purgatorio, and the Paradiso."¹⁷ One of the first journal entries related to Dante is Longfellow's visit to Rimini. Longfellow also wrote a letter to Greene on December 17, 1828, and used a quotation from Francesca to explain his own nostalgia and loneliness around Christmastime: "All of the incidents of our early acquaintance, as well as those of our first travels together must still be fresh and vivid in your recollection. In mine, they are almost too much so: for you will call to mind those expressive words of Dante in the melancholy little story of Francesca di Rimini ' . . . nessun maggior dolore / Che ricordarsi del tempo felice / Nella miseria . . . ' " (*Letters*, 1:284). Longfellow continued to quote Francesca for the rest of his life, especially when commemorating the anniversary of his wife Fanny's death in 1861.

This exposure to Italian culture also led to Longfellow's fascination with Catholicism, a religion that dominated his European travels. Even while at Bowdoin, Longfellow did not ascribe to the traditional view of perceiving Catholicism as threatening. He did not take part in the College's conservative Congregationalism and joined, instead, Bowdoin's Unitarian Society, which was founded in the 1820s. He wrote to a friend in November 1824 that "I wish something could be done for us; we are small as a grain of mustard seed. There are but six members now in college, and our library is limited to a hundred or two volumes" (*Letters*, 1:94). Granted, Longfellow did not endorse Dante's religious attitudes, but in general his overall view of the religion was positive, as he wrote to his brother on June 28, 1828, "I have been so long in Catholic countries that the abuses of this religion have little effect upon me. Its principles are as pure and holy as could be wished" (*Letters*, 1:273).

While in Italy Longfellow discovered that he loved Italian as a written language but that he disliked the sound of it (as pronounced in Tuscany, at any rate). He decided he was finished with learning how to speak Italian, aiming instead to "make my way through Italy with the little I

had acquired” (*Letters*, 1:257). This frustration with the Tuscan dialect and overall dissatisfaction with Florence echo some of Dante’s claims about his countrymen: “Let us next consider the Tuscans, who are so deluded as to claim for themselves the distinction of possessing the most illustrious vernacular” (*DVE* 30). Even with his distaste for the Tuscan tongue, and knowing of Dante’s own objections to it, Longfellow honored Dante as the poet who gave the Italian language a proper place in the literary world. In his September 2, 1830, inaugural address as professor of modern languages at Bowdoin, entitled “Origin and Growth of the Languages of Southern Europe and their Literature,” Longfellow discusses how Dante’s poem achieves “the expression of thoughts and feelings of a people, and we give it the appellation of national only when the character of a nation shows visibly and clearly through it.”¹⁸

Longfellow as Bowdoin Professor

While Longfellow was in Europe, he received a letter from his father informing him that Bowdoin, instead of offering him the professorship of modern languages, would only give him an instructorship. The professorship had an annual salary of \$1,000, while the instructorship only offered \$600. The original manuscript of Stephen’s letter to his son is lost, but Longfellow responded to his father on December 19, 1828, from Venice: “I assure you—dear father—I am very indignant at this. They say I am too young! Were they not aware of this three years ago? If I am not capable of performing the duties of the office, they may be very sure of my not accepting it” (*Letters*, 1:286). The reason for Bowdoin’s change of heart is unclear. It may be that the college was facing a tough economic moment, or that there was dissension among the trustees, or doubts surrounding Longfellow’s politics and religious beliefs.¹⁹ In a correspondence between trustees William Pitt Preble and Reuel Williams during the debate about whether to spend the money intended for Longfellow’s position on a new chapel, Preble wrote, “There is a project on foot I am assured from a source that cannot be mistaken to defeat the appointment of Mr. Longfellow on account of his supposed Unitarianism.”²⁰

The issue of his salary continued while he was in Germany. In February 1829 he wrote to his father:

I dislike the manner in which things are conducted there. Their illiberality in point of religion—and their narrow-minded views upon many other points,

needs no comment . . . I am inclined to think that the opposition came from the younger professors. I suppose they did not like the idea of seeing so young a man step at once into the chair of prof. without serving the usual apprenticeship. I have but one question to ask. Do the Professors of Bowdoin College speak the languages they teach? No—not one of them (*Letters*, 1:297).

Longfellow recognized how his youth, while providing new perspectives and energy, could be an obstacle in this case. Still, he had done what the college asked of him: learn the languages he was to teach. He began to feel skeptical about what life at Bowdoin would be. In a letter to his father in March 1829 he imagines an academic environment in which “two or three professors . . . deliver lectures in some *town*—not in a *village*—not in the woods if their lectures be worth anything—they will have hearers and disciples enough—and a *nucleus* will thus be formed around which is to grow an University” (*Letters*, 1:301). Longfellow’s hometown of Portland seemed to him “better adapted for it than any other place in our part of the country”; Bowdoin and Brunswick, he believed, were “too limited and superficial” (*Letters*, 1:301).

These concerns deepened when the college offered him a lectureship instead of a professorship. In a letter to Bowdoin’s president, William Allen, in August 1829 he writes:

The Professorship of Modern Languages, with a salary equal to that of other Professors, would certainly not have been refused. But having at great expense, devoted three years to the acquisition of the French, Spanish, Italian, and German languages, I cannot accept a subordinate station with a salary so disproportionate to the duties required (*Letters*, 1:321).

Eventually a compromise was reached and Longfellow was offered and accepted the position of professor on September 2, 1829. The salary was \$800 and Longfellow earned the extra \$200 a year by becoming Bowdoin’s librarian. Calhoun writes that Longfellow’s handling of the situation “revealed an independent streak in Henry that put his father on notice that the terms of their relationship had changed.”²¹

Once he began teaching, Longfellow’s love of languages—especially Italian—became apparent to both faculty and students. Dante soon came to be part of his academic life. In his inaugural speech he writes:

It [Italian] remained however comparatively rude and unformed till the commencement of the fourteenth century, when the all immortal Dante—the father

of Italian song—gave it stability and permanency by building with its still rude materials an edifice whose foundations were as broad and deep as the foundations of the world itself, and whose top pierced the heaven of heavens.²²

In this speech he also refers to Dante's "high prerogative of genius" and its ability "to give transcendent value to whatever it touches."²³ He continues: "Throughout the *Divina Commedia* of Dante it is easy to trace the workings of the political and religious character of his age. Whether he leads you to the peaceful shades of Paradise, and describes the immortal pleasure of the 'house not made with hand eternal in the heavens.'"²⁴ After making this reference to Dante's *Paradiso*, Longfellow continues the address by quoting Cary's translation of Dante's inscription above the gates of Hell in *Inferno* 3. J.C. Mathews cites this address as the "first time in his extant writing that [Longfellow] quoted Dante in translation."²⁵

Dante begins to show up frequently in Longfellow's writing and teaching while at Bowdoin. He gave a number of lectures on Dante in connection with a general course on Italian literature,²⁶ and he published two articles that mention Dante in the *North American Review* in 1832: "The Defence of Poetry," in January; and "History of the Italian Language and Dialects," in October. In the latter, Longfellow showed his familiarity with Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* as well. And he quotes Dante in *Saggi de' Novellieri Italiani d'Ogni Secolo* (1832) and in an Italian grammar text book he wrote in French, *Syllabus de la Grammaire Italienne* (1832). Students were not eligible to study Italian until they completed the required course in French, so to speed them along Longfellow combined the teaching of French and Italian by compiling a simple Italian grammar book written in French.²⁷ Longfellow paid Griffin out of his own pocket for printing costs, which he recovered once students purchased the books.

Longfellow considered the *Commedia* as something that could be of interest to the "youthful" mind. In a letter to his father in December 1829 he wrote:

The more I see of the life of an instructor the more I wonder at the course generally pursued by teachers. They seem to forget that the youthful mind is to be interested in order to be instructed: or at least they overlook the means, by which they may best lead on the mental faculties, at an age when amusement is a more powerful incentive than improvement. (*Letters*, 1:328)

While at Bowdoin Longfellow encountered objections to the teaching of Dante, but not the general disapproval of introducing Dante into the

curriculum that he later met with at Harvard. But together with larger issues such as the small size of the village of Brunswick and the petty internal politics of the college, they became a source of frustration that soon found outward expression. With the pseudonym of “H” he wrote a critique of Bowdoin for Portland’s *Eastern Argus*, the leading Democratic newspaper. “H” wrote that “the government of Bowdoin had excessive powers . . . in violation of ‘the spirit of our Constitution.’ Its officials could enter a student’s room at any hour, ‘notwithstanding the general principle that a man’s house is his Castle.’”²⁸ What is more, returning to a small town in Maine after spending three years in Europe also felt oppressive to him. The young professor often saw himself in exile, his days occupied with lessons and hearing recitations. He wrote to George Washington Greene in June 1830 about how the demands of his professorship kept him from the more exciting endeavors of translating, discovering, or writing poetry. “You see I lead a very sober, jog-trot kind of life. My circle of acquaintances in town is very limited, and I have taken great pains that it should be so—I am on very intimate terms in three families, and that is quite enough. I don’t care for general society. I like *intimate footings*” (italics original; *Letters*, 1:342). Longfellow’s main creative endeavor during this period was the publication of his grammar books, but as he told Greene, “It is very hard work to get a school book into general use. Almost everybody is supplied with grammars and such books—and the Italian, you know, is comparatively little studied in our country” (*Letters*, 1:341). Though Longfellow was making progress in shaping how Italian and Dante were taught, Brunswick’s environment was not yet ripe for that venture.

In November 1834 Longfellow published a story in the *New Yorker* about his “exile” entitled “The Wondrous Tale of a Little Man in Gosling Green.” The residents of Bunganuck, a thinly veiled allusion to Brunswick, live “in a drowsy land, where the rush of the waterfall lulls the inhabitants into a dreamy state of existence, leaving them neither quite asleep, nor quite awake.”²⁹ The “man in gosling green,” presumably Longfellow, settles in the town for unspecified reasons, and “falls into an irreversible decline, selling his worldly goods one by one and shutting himself away in his room over the shop. His health rapidly fails, and one day the deacon calls to determine once and for all if the rumors are true that he is an atheist.”³⁰

Bowdoin was also feeling the effects of Maine's newly established statehood, which caused debate as to the college's status as public or private. The case came to a head when President William Allen, dismissed in 1831 by the Maine legislature, sued the college for his salary and the \$5 fee paid for each diploma that was presented at commencement.³¹ In the case, Judge Joseph Story determined that the college was a private institution, not under the control of the Maine legislature, and since the Maine legislature had ordered Allen's dismissal in 1831, the act was unconstitutional and Allen was reinstated.

Longfellow had personal involvement in the case since his father argued against Allen. He also wrote in a letter to a friend, Alexander Hill Everett, in July 1833 illustrating his disapproval of Allen as president: "Things have taken their old course; and matters move on smoothly. We are all very glad to be beyond the reach of further Legislative interference, though some of us would not be sorry to have Dr. Allen resign" (*Letters*, 419). Allen finally left the college for good in 1839 amid joy from the students at his departure and Allen's own tirade against their behavior. According to William Hawes (class of 1837), "He scourged the students, the faculty, the overseers, the legislature, all with much bitterness, and rehearsed in his own peculiar manner all the college offenses & crimes which he could remember"³² Longfellow must have had difficulty developing the kind of Romance languages department he wished. There were larger political issues at hand, and the school itself was in a state of upheaval. It is notable that Longfellow, given this political climate, was able to contribute at all to Bowdoin's Department of Modern Languages.

Longfellow thus began looking for a bigger stage, where he could satisfy his loves for Italian and Dante. After various attempts to find professorships at the University of Virginia and New York University, he received word that Ticknor had resigned from Harvard after the death of his five-year-old son, George Haven.³³ This would become the position he would secure and retain for decades to follow. In December 1834 President Josiah Quincy offered Longfellow the Smith Professorship of Modern Languages and Literatures, with an annual salary of \$1,500, upon Ticknor's suggestion.³⁴ President Quincy included the following in his letter to Longfellow: "Should it be yr. wish, previously to entering upon the duties of the office to reside in Europe at yr. own expense a year or 18 months for the purpose of a more perfect attainment of the German, Mr. Ticknor will retain his office until your return" (*Letters*, 1:459). With

this offer, Quincy gave Longfellow a double escape from his exile in Brunswick: one as Harvard professor and one as European traveler once again. He told his father, "Good fortune comes at last; and I certainly shall not reject it. The last paragraph of the letter, though put in the form of a permission seems to imply a request. I think I shall accept that also" (*Letters*, 1:459). Though he would struggle with the administration at Harvard, as he did not succeed in removing "rules and regulations passed by the faculty which directly or indirectly imposed harmful restrictions upon the teaching of modern languages and literatures,"³⁵ he had more success cultivating interest in Italian and Dante there than Ticknor himself did at Harvard.

Longfellow differed from Ticknor in a few ways. While Ticknor was unpopular in college life due, in part, to his aristocratic tastes and condescending ways,³⁶ Longfellow's rapport with his students gained him admiration. He is said to have been the first Harvard professor to address his students as 'Mr. —,' a gesture of respect that increased Longfellow's approachability, already present due to his young age.³⁷ Also, Ticknor did not publish any work on Dante.³⁸ Before Longfellow arrived at Harvard, he had published two separate articles that discussed Dante, including the first summary and analysis of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* to appear in America. Longfellow's youthful energy must have been a breath of fresh air for the department, just as Harvard was a new and long-awaited experience for Longfellow.

Unlike Ticknor, Longfellow wasted no time teaching a course fully devoted to Dante as soon as he arrived at Harvard and widened the circle of his audience by offering public lectures.³⁹ For the most part, Longfellow's class lectures, known as "oral lectures," were unwritten; he would read the book into English to his class with a "running commentary and illustration."⁴⁰ In a lecture he dated March 28, 1838 (or March 11, 1840), Longfellow intended to follow Dante's *Purgatorio* canto by canto.⁴¹ In the lecture Longfellow creates simultaneously an everyday and sublime picture of Dante, recalling the language of his inaugural address as professor of modern languages at Bowdoin:

Here the image of the youthful poet rises before me, as he stood one summer day in that mean apothecary's shop at Siena, reading hour by hour in a rare old volume, unconscious of all around him, undisturbed by the sounds and sights of a crowded street, nor wakened from his dream even by the songs and music of a

bridal procession. This was Dante. This was the “Lord of the most high song, who like an eagle soars above the others.”⁴²

The dates of these written lectures occur soon after Longfellow’s arrival at Harvard on November 12, 1836, indicating how much of Longfellow’s interest in and study of Dante and Italian took place during his time at Bowdoin as a student and professor. Bowdoin was the ground in which the Dante-seed germinated and grew. It gave him the encouragement, means, forum, and freedom to explore the Italian language and its literature. Even what was stifling and provincial about Brunswick nourished his passion and study. Harvard and the English-speaking world beyond would benefit from the stately tree cultivated in Maine.

Boston, Massachusetts

NOTES

I wish to express my gratitude to Arielle Saiber, Charles Calhoun, and the archivists at the Bowdoin College Special Collections, Richard Lindemann and Daniel Hope, for their guidance in the research for this essay. I would also like to thank Anita Israel, Archivist of the Longfellow House, for permission to cite from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana’s essay, “Longfellow and Dante,” and Christian Dupont for providing me with his edited version of this unpublished piece.

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3. Emilio Goggio, “Longfellow and Dante,” *Annual Report of the Dante Society, with Accompanying Papers* 39–41 (1924): 26.

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5. Goggio, “Longfellow and Dante,” 25.

6. Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from His Journals and Correspondence* (Boston, 1886), 11.

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9. J. Chesley Mathews, “H. W. Longfellow’s Interest in Dante,” *Papers Presented at the Longfellow Commemorative Conference, April 1–3, 1982*. (Cambridge: Longfellow National Historical Park, 1982), 47.

10. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, vol. 1, 1814–1836. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1966), 1:53. Subsequent citations of Longfellow’s letters refer to this edition.

11. Thompson, *Young Longfellow*, 79.

12. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life*, 40.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. Ibid., 41.
16. La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage*, 44.
17. Dana, "Longfellow and Dante," 5.
18. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Origin and Growth of Southern Europe and of their Literature: An Inaugural Address by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Brunswick, Maine: Bowdoin College Library, 1907), 64.
19. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life*, 58.
20. Ibid., 59.
21. Ibid., 69.
22. Longfellow, *Origin and Growth of Southern Europe*, 40.
23. Ibid., 101.
24. Ibid., 103.
25. Mathews, "H. W. Longfellow's Interest in Dante," 49.
26. Goggio, "Longfellow and Dante," 25.
27. Thompson, *Young Longfellow*, 180.
28. Charles C. Calhoun, *A Small College in Maine: Two Hundred Years of Bowdoin* (Brunswick, Maine: Bowdoin College, 1993), 84.
29. Quoted in Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life*, 76.
30. Ibid., 77.
31. Calhoun, *A Small College in Maine*, 86.
32. Ibid., 89.
33. F. Dewey Amner, "Some Influences of George Ticknor upon the Study of Spanish in the United States," *Hispania* 11 (1928): 378.
34. La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage*, 45.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 43.
37. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life*, 130.
38. La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage*, 44.
39. Ibid., 45.
40. Mathews, "H. W. Longfellow's Interest in Dante," 51.
41. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Life of Dante." MS Am 1340 (106), Houghton Library, Harvard University.
42. Ibid., 71–72.

Longfellow and the New England Dante Tradition

K. P. VAN ANGLE

Dante's reception in New England during the generation before Longfellow was both more extensive and more interesting than has generally been acknowledged. As I have argued elsewhere,¹ while earlier scholars correctly asserted that this body of commentary was in many ways derivative of English models,² they overlooked many examples of New England Dante criticism before 1835. They also failed to appreciate the fact that the poet's reception in Boston in particular reflected that city's literary politics, especially the ambitions and fears of its educated elite, who formed "a socially and culturally distinct class" as high-minded as it was tenacious in asserting its influence. Known as the "Boston Unitarians" because of their predominant religious affiliation, these "prosperous merchants and their professional allies exercised leadership" with the aim of making eastern Massachusetts not only "the most intellectually exciting part of the country"³ but also "a republic of letters" rather than "a democracy," an enclave in which they would function as "a New England clerisy" fostering a revival of political conservatism, social deference, and cultural order.⁴ They sought thereby as well more broadly to confront an America that increasingly isolated them culturally, religiously, and politically, doing so despite their own often hobbling, ideological confection, dating back to Puritan times, as a bourgeois dominant class torn between the Arminian and antinomian structures of feeling (i.e., between the conscious and unconscious drive to affirm the necessity of order, deference, and hierarchy and a recessive need to rebel, dissent, and assert the rights of the individual).⁵

One manifestation of this attitude was that European authors were received in ways that allowed them to be deployed in a distinctly regional cultural context for ideological, political, and social ends. Dante was no exception. For one thing, the Boston elite were interested in using Italian history as a cautionary tale for their own time. They begged to differ with those who optimistically viewed the ancient historical concept of the translation of empire and the arts (*translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*) as predicting a long and glorious future for the United States, one in which “the rising glory of America” would soon culminate in what Thomas Jefferson called “an empire for liberty.” Instead, like the painter Thomas Cole or the novelist James Fenimore Cooper, Longfellow’s local predecessors took an almost apocalyptic view of the young republic’s prospects, arguing that democracy, ignorance, and egalitarianism threatened to undermine the virtue necessary for greatness in politics and the arts, thereby short-circuiting the cycle of *translatio* and plunging the United States back into its earlier primitive state before it had a chance to reach its high destiny. In this regard, Dante’s Italy was useful to them because it illustrated both the vigor of the mercantile republican stage of the *translatio* and the way that a nation might fall—in Italy’s case, via the excess and decadence of the high Renaissance to its lowly state at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Dante, by contrast, stood for these Bostonians as a positive example of how a member of a literary elite like their own could promote the proper values and influence a culture for the good while resisting the forces that would all too soon result in national decline. Indeed, he was a model for the Boston Unitarians’ own efforts to act as consensualist authority figures in the America of Andrew Jackson, and an exemplar of the republican virtue they felt they and their countrymen were in danger of losing.⁶

At the same time, however, the Dante one encounters in early nineteenth-century New England criticism also embodies the ideological contradictions of Unitarian Boston. For example, the eminent Harvard historian W. H. Prescott saw Dante on the one hand as a revolutionary and a dissenter—a rejecter alike of feudal authority and papal pretension—and on the other as a promoter of morality, religion, and political order. As such, Prescott’s Dante reflected the upper-class Bostonian polarization between the Arminian and antinomian structures of feeling.⁷ Likewise, the Dante of the generation before Longfellow bespeaks the paradox of repulsion and fascination that upper-class New

Englanders felt toward Catholicism, both culturally and theologically—something that was at least in part a manifestation of the New England elite's feelings of marginalization.⁸

Now, everything we know about Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's family background and early life might lead us to expect that his views on Dante would resemble those I have just been discussing. Born and raised a Unitarian, his immediate ancestors and living male relatives on both sides were lawyers, genteel farmers, merchants, naval officers, Harvard graduates, and Federalist politicians—people who had social instincts, political loyalties, and intellectual commitments like those of Dante's Brahmin admirers. Though no millionaire, like his future father-in-law, Longfellow was, in the context of coastal Maine, a member of the American upper class of his day, an elite composed of wealthy businessmen, moderate-sized landowners, and professionals who had since colonial times gradually experienced—and resisted—a decline in influence and deference.⁹

Newton Arvin years ago thus aptly described the poet's father as "the very pattern of the Federalist gentleman,"¹⁰ and Charles C. Calhoun more recently characterized Longfellow's own world view as

a very New England vision, indeed, a distinctly Boston one, Whiggish yet cautiously progressive. In religion, it was conventionally Unitarian, in politics democratic up to a point, or at least willing to judge people by their talents. It was based on a quiet belief in a hierarchical (and deferential) social order, but one imbued at the top with a strong sense of public duty and a willingness to make sacrifices for the public good.

As Calhoun goes on to say, in line with the contemporary gender ideology known as "domesticity," Longfellow accepted the notion that men and women had separate but complementary spheres of activity, endorsed the prospect of moderate social reform—especially when led from above—and viewed literature as having an elevating and broadening affect on society.¹¹ Even when he parted company with the dominant view of Brattle Street and Harvard Yard—as he did over abolition, which was opposed, for instance, both by wealthy Brahmin mill owners like his father-in-law and by most of the Harvard Corporation and faculty—his view can be ascribed to the New England upper-class's recessive antinomian regard for liberty and individual rights.¹² Moreover, Longfellow was also familiar with many of the intellectual concepts and themes deployed

in Unitarian Dante criticism, for example, the translation of empire, which he used as the backdrop to his treatment of Native Americans in *The Song of Hiawatha* and Jews in "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport"—peoples who were, in his view, like all noble savages, fated by history to decline and disappear.

Yet the fact is that in his early public Dante criticism (lectures, published essays, and the like), Longfellow breaks with his predecessors in significant ways. Thus many of his observations in his unpublished 1838 lectures on Dante might at first glance seem familiar to readers of Unitarian literary periodicals like the *North American Review* or the *Christian Examiner*. In the last of the three lectures, for example, Longfellow's Dante, like that of the previous generation, stands apart from his time and place. The Italian poet's "pride of character," we are told, "made him the advocate of right in an age of violence, a virtuous man in a corrupt country. Indeed the higher virtues of nature he beheld, not only in his Vision, but in his life."¹³ But here Longfellow's comments lack the grand historical narrative context and ideological purpose characteristic of earlier critics. His Dante is elevated from the mass of humanity because he was virtuous as an individual, not (as in Unitarian criticism) because of his didactic advocacy of the Arminian values of public morality and civic order. A little later in the same lecture, in fact, Longfellow seems to reject literary didacticism—a keystone of Unitarian criticism—per se when he unfavorably compares one of Dante's possible sources, the "Vision of Frate Alberico," to the *Divine Comedy*: "What in the Monk's imagination served to point a moral and adorn a homily, in the imagination of the poet, became one of the grandest works of human genius in song."¹⁴ Similarly, when we are told "the Divine Poem" stands as "the mirror of the Age in which its author lived;—or rather perhaps as a mirror of Italy in that Age," it is merely because in Longfellow's view the *Commedia* "faithfully images and reproduces" the people and events of the time.¹⁵ Longfellow invokes no politically loaded historical concept like the translation of empire. The same is true of his analysis of Dante's encounter with Sordello in the second lecture, which comprises a plot summary of and commentary on the "Purgatorio": Longfellow eschews the opportunity to editorialize on the servility and low state of Italy over the centuries and the lessons Americans might learn from them, focusing instead on the personal nature of Dante's indictment here of his native city and country.¹⁶ And his earliest lecture, on the "Life of Dante," treats the feudal

struggles of Dante's age or the primitive state of the Italian language before his time (again, favorite topics of the earlier New England critics) not as indicative of stages in the *translatio* but as discrete and contingent historical events.¹⁷

In much the same way, Longfellow's October 1832 *North American Review* essay on the "History of the Italian Language and Dialects,"¹⁸ written while he was still teaching at Bowdoin, begins with an account of the origins and early development of the Italian language. He follows the lead of two *North American Review* pieces published in 1817 and 1824, by Jared Sparks and Caleb Cushing, respectively.¹⁹ Moreover, Longfellow alludes to the *translatio* concept when he declares on the first page "that the language of a nation is the external symbol of its character and its mind."

To learn, then, how other nations have thought, and felt, and spoken;—to observe how the language of a people is influenced by its character, customs and government; and to trace it in its gradual development, as it spreads and unfolds itself, like a broad banner, above the march of civilization,—now high exalted in the advance of mind, and now waving to and fro in the breath of civil discord, or torn and prostrate beneath the rushing wheels of a conqueror's car,—this is a study worthy the best and noblest mind.²⁰

It quickly becomes apparent, however, that Longfellow is less interested in the way linguistic origins are implicated in the course of empire cycles, let alone in their political or cultural implications for nineteenth-century America, than he is in the various theories of how Italian originated. And whereas the older pair of New Englanders had presented Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio as "three men of extraordinary genius"²¹ who had alike renovated the language and the letters and the morals of their native land, here, "in Longfellow's estimation," the trio's achievements are deemed strictly intellectual, as they "were not so much bold innovators as expert sculptors giving shape to the crude material from which the Italian language had sprung."²² Furthermore, the bulk of Longfellow's account is descriptive or personally reminiscent rather than monitory or political in tone and substance. Given the prominence of Sparks and Cushing—the former was, for example, at various times both president of Harvard, where Longfellow would soon be teaching, and the sometime editor of the very journal for which he was currently writing—his divergence from the concerns of Unitarian Dante criticism, at the beginning of his career, seems all the more telling.

Other surviving Longfellow material reinforces this impression. The manuscript notes for his "Lectures on Dante 1852," for instance, do not list any of the Dante criticism of the previous generation in Boston among their bibliographical references.²³ The first two of his earlier (1831) five lectures on the "Literary History of the Middle Ages," while much beholden to Gibbon's thesis that "barbarism and religion" had brought the Roman Empire down, draw no lessons for the nineteenth century from the historical events and cultural changes they describe.²⁴ And while another lecture, "On the Origins of the Languages of Modern Europe" (1833), could wax melodramatic about the decline of Rome and the replacement of classical learning by monkish thought, he is concerned with editorial decisions in recent editions of the *Divine Comedy*, not with Dante's role in helping Italy recover from its fall to the bottom of the cycle of empire.²⁵ Finally, Longfellow's (1850) comments on Dante in his lecture "Italian Literature" concern the poet's life and the general impression that the *Commedia* makes on readers throughout the ages.²⁶

Why this divergence? Why did Longfellow begin his career as a critic of Dante by discounting the peculiarly didactic, political, and American focus of earlier Boston Dante criticism, a position he subsequently endorsed for the rest of his life. He was certainly not incapable of raising didactic or political issues in his writings—there is plenty of evidence that he was; nor is it that he was unwilling to connect Dante and his age with contemporary American events. (His journal from the early years of the Civil War, for instance, at least subconsciously connects the two at a number of points where he intersperses comments on the war's progress with comments on or language reminiscent of the *Commedia*.)²⁷ But perhaps because he was a practicing poet and translator, which none of the Unitarian Dantists was; and perhaps because his reading in European literary scholarship was wider and more multilingual than that of his predecessors, he regarded the *Divine Comedy* from the first not as "an isolated work of a particular age, a particular stage of culture," but—without sacrificing "the most absolute Individuality"—as a text "archetypal" and universal in its scope.²⁸ Longfellow read Dante, in other words, not from a local or provincial but from a more transatlantic perspective. As such, his reception of the poet was part of his attempt, throughout his career, to open America to the influence of European culture and literature—a phenomenon much commented upon in Longfellow studies.²⁹ It was, in other words, of a piece with his refusal to read literary texts in strictly national

or linguistic isolation, preferring instead to treat them comparatively (something illustrated by his pan-European reach in “The Poets and Poetry of Europe”).³⁰

Yet the point I would stress is that this impetus, paradoxically, is really an intensification and a more capacious version of a similar determination on the part of the earlier generation of New Englanders to maintain their ties with the high culture and scholarship of Europe. For the Calvinism that gave ideological expression to the class conflict of seventeenth-century New England continued to influence the region’s literary culture long after it was a theologically spent force, creating during Longfellow’s lifetime “the simultaneous desire to emulate and to be independent” from the literature of the metropole.³¹ Thus even though the critics and literati of Unitarian Boston were more provincial than Longfellow in their intellectual concerns, their very provinciality—or fear of exposure as provincial—led these Bostonians both to treat Dante and other European authors from a nationalistic perspective and yet also to found journals, fund programs for study in Europe for promising young scholars (like Longfellow), and try to measure themselves and their intellectual efforts at least by the standards of Edinburgh and London, if not those of Paris and Berlin. In the end, Longfellow’s reading of Dante, by diverging from the pattern laid down over the previous thirty years, in a subtle way constitutes part of the New England Dante tradition after all. It asserts nothing less than that Longfellow’s city and region and nation are not—as the Unitarians at their narrowest had hoped—enclaves unto themselves but are part of that broader republic of letters of which Dante had himself been such a prominent citizen.

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NOTES

I would like to thank Professor Lino Pertile and Mr. Matthew Pearl for both their advice and the provision of research materials as well as the staff of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, for their courtesy and professionalism during my visits there. Longfellow manuscript material quoted or referred to in this article is cited by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, as is the excerpt cited from Longfellow’s translation of Schelling in *Graham’s Magazine*, which I transcribed from a copy of that journal in the Houghton Library. An earlier version of this essay was presented as a paper at the annual meeting of the Dante Society in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 5, 2007.

1. K. P. Van Anglen, "Before Longfellow: Dante and the Polarization of New England," *Dante Studies* 119 (2001): 155–86.
2. The most extensive of the earlier treatments of Dante's reception, Angelina La Piana's *Dante's American Pilgrimage: A Historical Survey of Dante Studies in the United States, 1800–1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press for Wellesley College, 1948), 2–4, claims that this body of criticism was derivative, as do the other discussions of Dante's early American reception I list in "Before Longfellow," 179 nn. 1–2.
3. Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805–1861* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 7–9. See also the sources listed in Van Anglen, "Before Longfellow," 180 n. 6.
4. Michael T. Gilmore, "The Literature of the Revolutionary and Early National Periods," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 563–64.
5. This sketch of the Unitarians' position in society and their ideological conflation since colonial times summarizes the discussion and scholarship referenced in Van Anglen, "Before Longfellow," 156–58. The two structures of feeling mentioned here are defined and discussed in terms of New England history by the sources listed in 180 n. 9 and 181 n. 19.
6. See especially the discussion and scholarship referenced concerning Dante and the translation of empire and the arts in *ibid.*, 160–64, of which this paragraph is a summary. In addition to the sources listed in *ibid.*, 183 nn. 33–35, a more recent, magisterial history of the *translatio* as an intellectual concept can be found in J. G. A. Pocock, *The First Decline and Fall*, vol. 3 of *Barbarism and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). The ideology of consensualism (which tried to mediate between genetic patriarchalism and egalitarianism in order to preserve elite influence) is defined and discussed in *ibid.*, 158.
7. See Prescott passages cited and discussed in Van Anglen, "Before Longfellow," 164–66.
8. See *ibid.*, 174–79, for examples of Unitarian Boston's use of Dante to express their religious anxieties in terms of their ambivalence over Catholicism. Unitarian Boston Dante criticism was not, as this last point suggests, wholly circumscribed by the essentially political and socioeconomic factors that are the focus of my own analysis. For example, Dante still proved useful as a weapon in the period's ongoing theological disputes between the Unitarians and the Trinitarians, both Calvinist and non-Calvinist. See Kathleen Verduin, "Dante's *Inferno*, Jonathan Edwards, and New England Calvinism," *Dante Studies* 123 (2005): 133–61.
9. For an excellent description of Longfellow's family background, see Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 5–21. David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 37–40, provides a good summary of the class system in colonial and early postcolonial America.
10. Newton Arvin, *Longfellow: His Life and Work* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), 6.
11. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life*, 246–47.
12. Carla Bosco, "Harvard University and the Fugitive Slave Act," *New England Quarterly* 79 (2006): 227–47, provides the institutional context for understanding what she calls Longfellow's "moderate" abolitionism (238).
13. "Lecture on 'Divina Commedia' May 22, 1838. Midnight," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (106), 9–10, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
14. *Ibid.*, 34, 37–38.
15. *Ibid.*, 47.
16. "Analysis of 'Purgatorio' March 22, 1838," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (106), 21–22.
17. "'Life of Dante,' Jan. 15, 1838? or March 11, 1840?" Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (106), esp. 3–18.
18. "History of the Italian Language and Dialects," *North American Review* 35 (1832): 283–342. For an illuminating discussion of this essay, see Christoph Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006) 159–67.
19. Cited and discussed, Van Anglen, "Before Longfellow," 162–64.

20. "History of the Italian Language," 283.
21. Caleb Cushing, "Boccaccio's Decameron," rev. of *Il Decameron di Messer Giovanni Boccaccio corretto ed illustrate con Note tratte da Vari, dal Dott. Giulio Ferrario* (Milan, 1803), *North American Review* 19 (1824): 68–69.
22. Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux*, 161, paraphrasing Longfellow, "History of the Italian Language," 295.
23. "Lectures on Dante 1852," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (107). His notes do, however, mention such British contemporaries as Macaulay and Carlyle.
24. "Literary History of the Middle Ages," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (7), esp. 64–65, 87–119.
25. "On the Origins of the Languages of Modern Europe," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (10), 55 and 93, resp. This manuscript also includes "The Literature of the Dark Ages."
26. Longfellow, "Italian Literature," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (38), 10–23.
27. For example, see Longfellow's journal entry for September 1862, on the second battle of Bull Run. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, Houghton Library, MS Am 1340 (209–10), 193.
28. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Dante's *Divine Comedy*. From the German of Schelling," *Graham's Magazine* 36 (June 1850): 353.
29. For example, this is the theme of the latter half of Irmscher's *Longfellow Redux* (145 ff.), culminating in his account of Longfellow's translation of the *Divine Comedy*.
30. "The Poets and Poetry of Europe," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (66).
31. Susan Manning, *The Puritan-Provincial Vision: Scottish and American Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 71.

Chronicling Longfellow's Interest in Dante: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana and Joseph Chesley Mathews

CHRISTIAN Y. DUPONT

Longfellow's interest in Dante was manifest to his contemporaries not only through his Harvard courses and translation of the *Divine Comedy* but also through the lore of the Dante Club, which aided its completion and helped to inspire the formation of the Dante Society. It remained, nevertheless, for subsequent generations to trace the more intricate and intimate details concerning the evolution of his lifelong passion for Italy, its language, and its foremost poet. During the 1930s and '40s, Longfellow's grandson and namesake, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, and J. Chesley Mathews, a professor of English, jointly combed Longfellow's journals, correspondence, and other sources to uncover the evidence that other scholars have drawn upon since. Dana's previously unpublished essay "Longfellow and Dante" and Mathews's bibliographical catalog of Longfellow's Dante collection, presented in this special issue of *Dante Studies*, owe their genesis to their long years of collaboration—however unlikely the prospect for such a partnership may at first have appeared.

Longfellow House and Harry Dana

Following Longfellow's death in 1882, his eldest daughter, Alice, continued to live in the family's historic residence on Brattle Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Along with her brother, Ernest, and her two sisters,

Edith and Anne Allegra, Alice considered the preservation of the home a duty to posterity. Admirers would often ask to visit the precincts where the most famous of American authors had penned his memorable verses and other works, and where General George Washington had set up his temporary headquarters during the siege of Boston at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. To safeguard not only the home but its vista and surroundings, the family donated to the City of Cambridge the tract of land that lay between it and the Charles River, which landscape architect Charles Eliot subsequently developed into Longfellow Park.

As Alice and her siblings grew older, the strain of keeping the house open for regular public tours became harder to manage, and so in 1913—likely at the suggestion of Richard Henry Dana III and Joseph Thorp, both lawyers and the husbands of Edith and Annie, respectively—the Longfellow House Trust was created as a legal and financial entity to ensure that the property would be maintained in perpetuity. To this end, the Trust included provisions that allowed Alice to continue living in the home and other descendants to do so if they wished.

Henry (Harry) Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, who had grown up next door with his three brothers and two sisters, moved into Longfellow House with his aunt in 1917 and thereafter assumed primary responsibility for managing public tours and dealings with the trustees. The move had been prompted by Dana's dismissal from his professorship in comparative literature at Columbia University on account of his involvement in protests against the Great War. Though he had earned all of his degrees from Harvard, the controversy kept the university from offering him a teaching post.¹ Dana therefore pursued his academic interests as best he could by giving occasional courses on comparative literature and Russian studies at the New School for Social Research and other institutions. He also continued to promote global socialism and pacifism through the editorials he contributed to *New Masses*, *Soviet Russia Today*, and various progressive periodicals. He traveled extensively throughout Europe and even lived for a year in the Soviet Union from 1927–1928. He returned to Cambridge upon Alice's death in December 1928, in order to tend more directly and fully to the conservation of Longfellow House and the curatorship of the Longfellow and Dana family legacies.

Even so, Dana was absent for long stretches, sojourning in the Soviet Union four times over the next six years. A longer and more disruptive episode began in the spring of 1936, following Dana's humiliating arrest

on a "morals charge" for allegedly propositioning a teenage boy.² Dana was widely suspected of being a homosexual, and it is possible that the accusation was brought in order to serve the interests of certain Longfellow House trustees who had been seeking to transfer control of the historic home to Radcliffe College (Alice was one of the founders and chief benefactors) or Harvard. Dana was acquitted a month later but spent the next six months traveling in Europe, no doubt to escape from the lingering strife and to allow matters to settle. On his return to Cambridge in October 1936, however, he was prevented from resuming his residence at Longfellow House due to renewed tensions with the trustees. He was permitted to enter the home for "literary purposes" but was only able to live there again after the death of the most contentious trustee some sixteen months later. Finally, in 1938, after having successfully defended his family's title to the home if not his own reputation, he was at last able to pursue his goals for building a public visitation program and gathering additional materials that documented the history of Longfellow House and its occupants. He published a visitor's guide³ and later a new edition of his paternal grandfather's 1840 literary success, *Two Years before the Mast*,⁴ as well as a comprehensive study of the Dana family in America.⁵ He also facilitated visits by researchers who wished to consult the archives he was actively assembling and organizing.⁶

Harry Dana and J. Chesley Mathews

In December 1936 a graduate student from the University of California, Berkeley, wrote to the library at Harvard University to inquire whether it held Longfellow's private library, as he had some questions about particular volumes that Longfellow would have owned.⁷ Harvard librarian W. B. Briggs forwarded the letter to Harry Dana for reply since Longfellow's library had remained at Longfellow House, where it continues to be held today.⁸

Dana's reply does not survive, but in a subsequent letter addressed to Dana, the student, Joseph Chesley Mathews, explained the motivation behind his inquiry:

I am interested in Longfellow's knowledge of Dante, and was wondering when his interest in Dante began. . . . I have found no evidence that he read Dante before 1828, when in Italy. But I came across an article by E. Goggio, in the



Fig. 1: Longfellow's study, circa 1940.

Dante Studies Annual Reports (1924, I believe), which begins by saying that Cary's and Boyd's translations were in H. W. L.'s father's library, and that H. W. L. first read Dante there. . . . I am very skeptical of the truth of Goggio's statement; it seems to me that such a piece of information would not have escaped Samuel Longfellow when he was writing the *Life of HWL*. If you can throw any further light on the question, I would appreciate hearing from you.⁹

Mathews concluded the letter by revealing his larger ambition to conduct a comprehensive study of Dante in American literature as the subject of his doctoral dissertation, which he would write under the direction of J. S. P. Tatlock and Rudolph Altrocchi at the University of California, Berkeley. "I think you know both of them," Mathews remarked in closing, as if to ensure Dana's attention.¹⁰

Dana generally filed the letters he received from researchers, often placing carbon copies of his replies in the same folder. The folder that preserves Dana's correspondence with Mathews includes more than four dozen letters covering some fourteen years.¹¹ Nevertheless, it seems that two full years went by before Mathews renewed his contact with Dana.

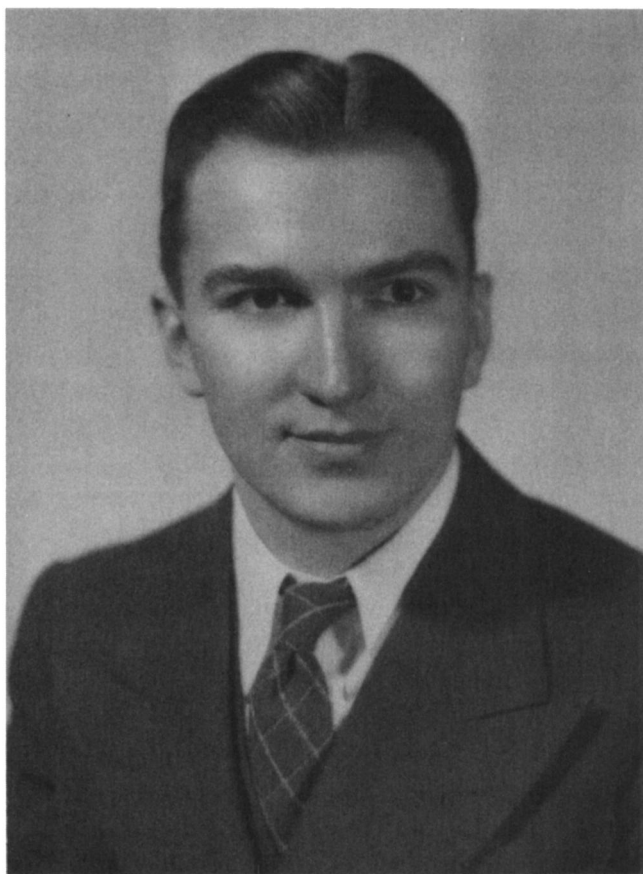


Fig. 2: Mathews as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1936.

By that time, Mathews had finished his dissertation, for which he was awarded a prize by the Dante Society,¹² and had received an appointment to the faculty of the English Department at the University of Texas at Austin.

In December 1938 Mathews signaled to Dana that he intended to continue his study of Dante and American authors—Longfellow in particular—by turning to an investigation of unpublished sources. He therefore asked whether he might enjoy the privilege of spending several days at Longfellow House during the following July or August to look through Longfellow's library and any manuscript materials, including Longfellow's personal journals and letters.¹³

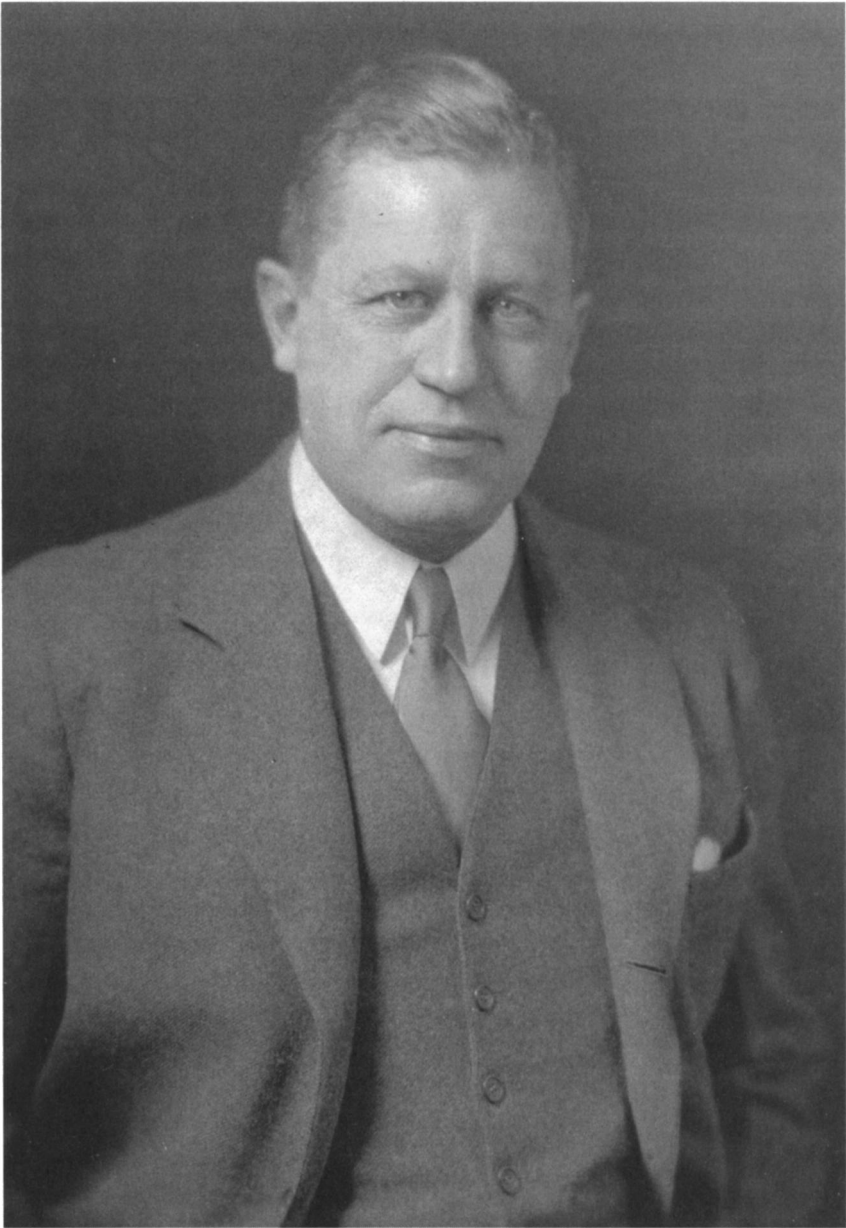


Fig. 3: Photograph of Dana by Bachrach, circa 1940.

Mathews was not able to make the trip to Cambridge in the summer of 1939 but set his sights on the following one, and so he wrote again to Dana for permission to visit and conduct research at Longfellow House, this time also enlisting Professor Altrocchi to send a letter of introduction on his behalf.¹⁴ Dana did not keep a copy of his response, but judging by Mathews's next letter, it must have been designed in some measure to dissuade him or at least test his resolve. Yet if there is one quality that marked Mathews's character, it was persistence, bordering sometimes on dogged pleading. "I deeply appreciate your kindness in being so frank and open about the difficulties I might encounter," he replied, "but by writing me as you have done, you have made the problem easier for me, and I am grateful to you." Mathews then went on to promise that he would not write anything objectionable about Longfellow, and moreover offered to sign an agreement that would require him to submit to the approval of the Longfellow House trustees the draft of any article or book that he might seek to publish.¹⁵

Dana did preserve a carbon copy of the lengthy retort he issued next, comprising four full typewritten pages. The letter exhibits a stern tone for fear that Mathews's zealousness was blinding him to the points Dana had attempted to outline previously, particularly his own engagement with the subject of Longfellow's interest in Dante:

In the first place, I apparently did not make it sufficiently clear that having worked on this question of Longfellow and Dante, having written out several lectures on it, and planning some time to publish this material, I am a little reluctant to hand it over to someone who feels that he can only work for two months on this.¹⁶

It is difficult to say which lectures Dana had in mind, unless they were among those he would have given in his courses on comparative literature, as his numerous public speeches were concerned primarily with contemporary social movements and their reflection in literature and drama. During his academic training, Dana had been conditioned to regard Dante as a literary crux, not only for Longfellow but Western literature generally. A succinct expression of his viewpoint on the latter is an essay titled "The Six Centuries since Dante," which he contributed to a volume published in 1926 to honor the noted Harvard professor of English composition and comparative literature Barrett Wendell, under whom he had studied.¹⁷ To Wendell, as to many other contemporary literary critics who took account

of Dante, the Florentine poet marked the watershed between the medieval and modern eras. As such, Dante could represent the desires of both an “honest conservative” like Wendell, who sought to live up to the “best of what has survived as fittest through the ordeal of time,” as well as an “honest radical” like Dana himself, for whom Dante kindled “that fierce fire of rebellion which burns with longing for a better world.”¹⁸

Returning to Mathews, Dana also expressed his concern that the young scholar did not appreciate the difficulty in ferreting out relevant references to Dante from the mass of materials that Longfellow left behind. While Dana did not object to having serious researchers examine unpublished documents, he needed further convincing that Mathews was up to the task:

The fact that in all these cases you have apparently not read my letter carefully or have misunderstood what I tried to say, gives me the uncomfortable feeling that future letters from me or from other members of the family may be similarly misunderstood. I only hope you will not make similar misinterpretations of what my grandfather has written.¹⁹

Evidently, Dana’s chief concern was not whether Mathews might write something unfavorable but rather that it should reflect a thorough and accurate investigation of the sources. “I dislike not the books that go too far, but those that do not go far enough,” he remarked.²⁰

To ensure the accurate representation of unpublished materials, Dana clarified that he would request Mathews to submit his writing to review by Longfellow’s descendants—and not the trustees of Longfellow House, as Mathews had himself offered. “It is true that house itself is legally held by the Trustees for the benefit of the descendants,” Dana explained, “yet, since nothing is said in the Trust about the manuscripts, I maintain they belong to the Longfellow heirs.”²¹ In fact, the question of the ownership and disposition of Longfellow’s *Nachlass* was a contentious issue that Dana and other family members would wrestle with for years to come. Considered in that light, it seems that Mathews’s research interests provided Dana an occasion to assert his authority and perhaps even to attempt to reclaim some of his academic stature, for he undoubtedly mourned the loss of respect that his credentials might otherwise have earned him.²²

All this may give you the impression that the family is very severe and in a certain sense it is true. I think we would rather be accused of having too high standards

of scholarship than of having too low standards of scholarship. My real mortification is that when we have given students permission to quote from unpublished manuscripts in the files, they have made such careless mistakes in mis-copying Mr. Longfellow's manuscripts, that any accurate scholars in the future cannot rely on their printed texts, but must return to the manuscripts themselves."²³

As an example, Dana returned to Emilio Goggio's essay, which Mathews had cited previously. "If you wish," Dana remarked with evident frustration and offense, "I shall gladly show you a copy of this paper which was printed by the Dante Society, in which I have marked the mistakes that he has made in trying to copy what Longfellow wrote, which averages up to a mistake in every three or four lines."²⁴

Perhaps concerned that venting his frustrations might dissuade Mathews from his proposed research, Dana admitted that Mathews might be the victim of the carelessness of others. "If you are willing to postpone the work for a year," he hinted, "perhaps this situation might by that time have cleared up better."²⁵ Dana then disclosed that when he had mentioned Mathews's project to the next most senior Longfellow descendant, "her immediate reaction to the idea of someone coming and working among these papers for two months was expressed by a sort of sigh."²⁶ Retreating yet further from the harsh tone with which he began, Dana also offered Mathews another option: "If you do not care to postpone your trip here until some later year, you could perhaps select some small corner of this large field which you might work on this summer," one that would not conflict, in other words, with his own plans to publish on the subject of Longfellow and Dante. "We could perhaps arrange between us some division," he suggested by way of compromise.²⁷

At this juncture, Dana revealed his aspirations more clearly. The previous evening, he had attended the annual meeting of the Dante Society, which saw the election of Harvard professor Fred Norris Robinson as president, succeeding J. D. M. Ford. Seemingly buoyed by the prospects that issued from the event, he related to Mathews that

both Professor Ford and Professor Robinson asked me if I would read, either at the next annual meeting of the Dante Society or in the one after next, a paper on "Dante and Longfellow." . . . There is a plan to hold this anniversary meeting in the Longfellow House here, where the first two or three meetings of the Dante Society took place as well as the innumerable meetings of the earlier Dante Club. In this paper will be incorporated unpublished passages from the correspondence of Longfellow and Lowell, Lowell and Norton, etc., which are preserved here in the various fireproof vaults in this house.²⁸

He continued:

Since, as I have said, I began gathering this material over thirty years ago, I am not prepared to relinquish this project entirely to you, on account of a request that has come from you only in the last year. Possibly you may feel that there will be no clash of interests here, since you were not intending to say much about either the Dante Club or the Dante Society. Yet I shall wish to feel free, in taking up the matter of the Dante Club, to deal with Longfellow's translation, with his Sonnets on Translating the "Divine Comedy," and indeed whatever seems connected with the study of Dante or with the influence of Dante upon him. This might well encroach upon your own field of work. Yet, if we enter into an understanding in the proper spirit, it may still be possible to avoid unpleasant clashes. With this work accomplished, I shall be in a better position to be of help to you.²⁹

In a four-page handwritten reply, Mathews attempted once more to secure Dana's favor while not giving up too much of the ground that bordered his own research and publication aims.³⁰ Evidently anxious over the reception with which his entreaties might be met, he wrote again the next day to recapitulate them on the excuse that he had neglected to include a stamp for Dana's reply with his previous letter.³¹

It is remarkable that from such quarrelsome beginnings a collaborative partnership, much less friendship, would develop, yet both were about to emerge. Although Dana did not preserve a copy of his next reply to Mathews written two weeks later, he seems to have acceded to Mathews's earnestness and provided him with the draft of an agreement stating the conditions under which he would be permitted to have access to and to quote from Longfellow's unpublished papers. He also enclosed a copy of recent publication of some letters by the American Dante translator Thomas William Parsons, seemingly as a gesture of encouragement, even amity.³²

Mathews was naturally pleased that the pack ice had broken up and that a navigable path to his scholarly aspirations now lay open before him. In his reply, he readily consented to signing the agreement and following the course of study that Dana proposed for him, which included his exploration of Longfellow's interest in Dante prior to 1861, the year in which Longfellow had begun serious work on his translation of the *Divine Comedy* following the tragic fire that claimed the life of his beloved wife, Fanny.³³ Concluding his letter in the hope that all obstacles had been

removed, Mathews announced his intention to arrive in Cambridge by July 1.

It is unclear just how much time Mathews spent at Longfellow House during the summer of 1940 or how much he was able to accomplish. Nonetheless, his encounters with Dana appear to have gone well, for several weeks later, upon resuming their correspondence, Mathews reminisced about their dinners at the Cock Horse and mentioned that he seen the issue of *Life* magazine that included a feature on Longfellow House. Commenting upon an accompanying photograph that included Dana seated on a sofa in the background, Mathews expressed his disappointment that the image was not clearer, as if to indulge his susceptibility for feeling slighted.³⁴ He likewise solicited Dana's sympathy by returning to their common target of criticism, Emilio Goggio, whom Mathews noted had published an article on Emerson in the most recent issue of *Italica*, observing that "it is not adequate, so far as my interests are concerned."³⁵ Mathews then had to confess that on account of changing residence, "The books and notes I brought from Cambridge I have not even unpacked; they are in two cartons waiting to be transported to my office. I hope, if ever I can get time, to do Thoreau and Emerson this year, and then work on Longfellow next summer."³⁶ Nevertheless, over the next several months Dana continued to add to Mathews's store of research materials, sending him photographs, photostats and transcriptions of various pieces of correspondence and other items.³⁷ The two scholars also consulted one another about their respective projects, offering to exchange copies of their manuscripts and discussing the titles under which they should be published. Mathews said that he thought Dana's idea of using "The Dante Club" for his essay would be best, or perhaps "Longfellow and the Dante Club"—though not the more general title "Longfellow and Dante," which he might have meant to reserve for himself, despite its prior use by Goggio.³⁸ In a postscript to a subsequent letter, assuming that the paper that Dana would read before the Dante Society would be published in its annual bulletin, Mathews wondered whether the society might not also want to publish a paper of his own under a title such as "Echoes of Dante in Longfellow's Poetry" or "Dantean Influence in Longfellow's Poetry."³⁹ Their convivial fervor notwithstanding, their respective ambitions would be delayed several seasons; Mathews's proposed essay would not appear for another eight years.⁴⁰



Fig. 4: Dana seated on the sofa, responding to questions from a visitor. Detail of an original photograph by Otto Hagel from a photo essay on New England literary scenes that he had been commissioned to produce for *Life*, October 14, 1940, p. 99.

At the time, the Dante Society was not positioned to provide much more than moral support for such endeavors. Following the six hundredth anniversary of Dante's death in 1921, which the society did little to commemorate, its activities had diminished still further. So little transpired, and funds became so meager that for some years only combined annual reports were issued. In 1933, as a consequence of the Great Depression, annual membership dues were reduced from five dollars to just one dollar. They were adjusted in 1936 to three dollars per year for Cambridge area residents and two dollars for nonresidents. Though some new members were added, the net economic effect was still not enough to sustain the publication of annual reports, which were suspended altogether that year, though the society did manage to issue a few separate publications—giving rise, evidently, to the hopes that Dana and Mathews held in seeing their own work published by the society.⁴¹

On May 21, 1941, Dana wrote to Mathews with patent satisfaction concerning the sixtieth anniversary meeting of the Dante Society, which he did host at Longfellow House as planned. He commented proudly,

"The present president sat in the same chair that the first President had sat in 1881, with all the pictures and furniture in the room unchanged since that day."⁴² He also sought to make Mathews feel as though he had been a part of the meeting by mentioning that those in attendance had voiced the highest praise for his 1938 dissertation, calling it "the most scholarly of all the recent prize essays."⁴³

Reporting on the reading of his own paper, Dana said that the lively discussion had prevented his starting until after nine o'clock, constraining him to skip over what he considered some of the best passages.⁴⁴ "It seems to have been well received, however, and they begged me to print it in full in the next Annual Report. I shall probably do this, although it may involve me in considerable expense," he commented, noting that Vincenzo Cioffari had to pay a subvention of one hundred dollars for the publication of his essay on "The Conception of Fortune and Fate in the Works of Dante."⁴⁵ "On the other hand," Dana added, "a literary agent in New York wants me to send him the article to see if he cannot place it in the *Atlantic Monthly* or somewhere else."⁴⁶ Recognizing that it would be too long for a popular magazine, he considered that an extract might be sold, the proceeds from which would in turn enable him to publish the essay in full with the Dante Society.⁴⁷ At the same time, he counseled Mathews, "if you see a chance to print this article of yours [i.e., the above-mentioned "Echoes" essay] or any of the rest of your material elsewhere, I cannot help telling that you might be wise to do so."⁴⁸ He also regrettably advised Mathews that since he had only one copy of his own paper, he would not send it to him as requested but expressed hope that he would instead be able to share it with him during the return visit that Mathews had proposed for the following month.⁴⁹

Dana's preoccupation with Mathews's interests returns in subsequent letters. For instance, on one occasion he offered the following witty, yet apprehensive, analysis that simultaneously reveals the meticulous nature of their shared bibliographical pursuit:

In preparing my paper on Longfellow and Dante for publication by the Dante Society, I am troubled by the fear that you may think I am stealing too much of your thunder. . . . In checking up I find that at least 95% of the references which you found in the journals and the letters are being left quite untouched by me. Out of about 420 such references, I am only using 17 that were not already included and indexed in Samuel Longfellow's *Life*, where they are accessible to anyone. . . . I cannot help hoping, then, that you will not object if I seem to be stealing something like 6% percent of your thunder.⁵⁰

Wanting now always to conciliate and encourage, Dana hastened to add that “in return I hope to be able to call your attention to a few references to Dante which may have escaped your attention.” He then listed about a dozen new references to Dante in Longfellow’s letters that he had recently discovered.⁵¹

Mathews did manage to return to Cambridge that summer, and he and Dana seem to have had a productive time together judging by their correspondence from the ensuing months, which is filled with increasing numbers of citations and references to reproductions of materials for Mathews’s later use. Yet the task also seems to have multiplied in accordance with their efforts. In a letter from September 8, 1941, Dana observed, “There still remains, I think, a good deal of material to be looked over and studied more thoroughly, especially in Longfellow’s unpublished lectures on Dante, notes on the sources of Dante, etc., and in the letters by George Washington Greene and others taking up Dante matters.”⁵² He expressed hope that Mathews might be persuaded to return the following summer “to finish up this work.”⁵³ “Meanwhile,” Dana added, “I should like to send you the proof sheets of my article on the Dante Society so that I can get the benefit of your suggestions as to changes and additions that might be made in it.”⁵⁴

Dana’s last remark raises interesting questions for which there are no apparent answers. Why did he refer to his article as being *on* the Dante Society rather than *for* the Dante Society? Up to this point, he had always described the focus of his topic to be Longfellow and Dante, or Longfellow’s Dante Club, but not the society as such. Secondly, was his reference to page proofs of his article actual or only aspirational? There is no evidence in the Longfellow House archives indicating that Dana ever had any portion of the paper he presented to the Dante Society set up in type.

Passing from the fall of 1941 into the winter of 1942, the mood darkened for the country and the two scholars who were struggling under the shadow of the Second World War and their private fortunes. On January 8, Mathews began the New Year by writing to Dana to thank him for having sent a Christmas poem. “I was very glad to get it, even though it made me feel ashamed for having let so many weeks, even months, go by without writing to you,” he confessed.⁵⁵ His wife had been ill and he had not been able to make any progress on his writing. His usual optimism for the future had ebbed. “With the world going as it is, I may be lucky

to have a job next year," he reflected. "I am afraid to hope for any grant for research."⁵⁶

That May, in lieu of any published proceedings, Dana offered Mathews his own version of a report of the annual Dante Society meeting as he had done the year before. On this occasion, the meeting was held at the home of the society's president, Fred Norris Robinson, just across Brattle Street on Longfellow Park.⁵⁷ There was much discussion of Ralph Waldo Emerson's translation of the *Vita nuova*, which the distinguished Emerson scholar Ralph L. Rusk had recently discovered in the basement of one of Emerson's descendants as the family was preparing to deposit Emerson-related materials in the newly opened Houghton Library at Harvard.⁵⁸ On account of this discovery and the attention it had drawn to Emerson as "America's Lost Dantean," as Matthew Pearl would later refer to him, Mathews had quickly proposed and had accepted for publication an article on "Emerson's Knowledge of Dante"—a project to which he had alluded in a letter to Dana at the end of April.⁵⁹ Some years later, Mathews would address a meeting of the Dante Society held at Houghton Library in 1954 on the topic of Emerson's *Vita nuova* translation and would publish an edited version of the same in the *Harvard Library Bulletin*.⁶⁰

In addition to recognizing the importance of Mathews's work on Emerson and encouraging it, Dana also reported to Mathews that the society had discussed his proposed paper on "Echoes of Dante in Longfellow's Poetry" during its annual meeting and determined that the paper should be published along with Dana's essay and another by Cioffari in the next installment of the society's proceedings.⁶¹ Yet Dana guarded his optimism, noting that the society's secretary, George Weston, "seems to have a tendency towards procrastination, especially in war time."⁶² "Personally I should very much prefer not to wait," he confided to Mathews, "but to have our separate articles printed separately as soon as we can."⁶³

Mathews replied hastily, concurring with Dana's sentiments.⁶⁴ A few weeks later he wrote again to say that there was "slender chance" that he might be able to return to Cambridge before the end of the summer, a possibility that he confirmed the following week.⁶⁵ The year that had begun so dismally was beginning to look more promising.

Mathews did manage to spend a few days with Dana that August, furthering both their friendship and their collaborative research into Longfellow's interest in Dante. Nevertheless, Mathews's immediate focus remained on Emerson. In a letter from September, Mathews turned to

Dana to ask him to inquire with the leadership of the Dante Society about the possibility of his presenting a paper on Emerson at the next year's annual meeting.⁶⁶ He also announced that the University of Texas had promoted him to the rank of assistant professor and that he had even received an offer from another college. Meanwhile, Mathews also asked Dana to serve as a reference for his application for a Guggenheim fellowship, which would allow him a year of concentrated study in to which to finish his Emerson and Longfellow projects.⁶⁷ Mathews later admitted to Dana that he was not optimistic about being awarded the fellowship, and, in fact, he did not receive it.⁶⁸ As a consequence, he would also have to admit that he would not be prepared to speak to the Dante Society about Emerson the following spring and so had to ask Dana to investigate the possibility of postponing the lecture that he had been successful in arranging.⁶⁹

Despite these setbacks and delays, Dana and Mathews continued to discuss how they should divide up the areas they would cover with their respective essays, or whether to collaborate on a single monograph, as Mathews proposed in a letter toward the end of 1942.⁷⁰ "It is very generous of you to offer to collaborate with me in making a single book," Dana responded. "In many ways I should like that. I think, however, that I had better stick to my plan of making mine merely an article for the publications of the Dante Society, in which I shall have no foot-notes."⁷¹ In encouraging Mathews to undertake the larger and more scholarly project he envisioned, Dana once more revisited the question of how best to title their respective publications:

Now that I am planning the whole field, everyone is urging me to call my paper "Longfellow and Dante." That will make it fit in with the series of other papers that I am writing on "Longfellow and Tennyson," "Longfellow and Hawthorne"; and others that I have in mind on "Longfellow and Goethe," "Longfellow and Tasso," "Longfellow and Emerson," etc. . . . I realize that this may be the title you were planning for your own book and that in your case, too, it may fit in as part of a series with "Emerson and Dante," "Lowell and Dante," etc. . . . My own feeling is that there would be no objection to our both using the same title, if you wish to, especially as it is not two books, but one will be a book and the other an article. As a matter of fact, neither you nor I could claim any monopoly on that title, since it was already used by Emilio Goggio in his article.⁷²

Contradicting the advice he had given two years earlier, or perhaps just weary of the deliberation, Mathews responded that he had no objection

to Dana's using "Longfellow and Dante" as a title for his essay, adding that while he had not yet settled on the title for his own he would not have any compunction about employing the same.⁷³

The question of labeling at last put to rest, it remained to produce the goods. Once again, delays ensued. Mathews's wife gave birth to their second child that summer and the following year he accepted an offer from Santa Barbara State College, which would soon be developed and reorganized into a campus of the University of California. As a consequence, his research and writing were curtailed. For his part, Dana became absorbed in other projects—he always had several at hand—including an essay on the origin and development of Longfellow's "Evangeline," which he coauthored with Hawthorne's grandson⁷⁴ and the new edition of *Two Years before the Mast*.⁷⁵

Mathews and Dana did not keep in close or regular contact over the next few years, yet their friendship seems to have grown deeper. In a letter from May 1948, nearly a dozen years since his first, Mathews opened with a salutation of "Dear Harry" for the first time, a token of familiarity that Dana readily reciprocated and perhaps initiated.⁷⁶ The topics were always the same, namely, Mathews's hopes for a summer visit to Cambridge and the possibility of addressing the Dante Society.

It is not clear whether Mathews did make it to Cambridge that summer, though most likely he did not. Toward the end of July 1948, Mathews remarked to Dana that he was anxious to get back to his study of Longfellow and Dante now that the end of the Emerson project appeared to be in sight.⁷⁷ He hoped that he might be able to spend the following summer at Longfellow House, but in order to do so he figured that he would need some income from summer teaching. He therefore asked Dana whether he might be able to help him get a position at Harvard as a lecturer, suggesting that he might offer his course on the *Divine Comedy* in translation, which had become popular with his students at Santa Barbara. Confessing embarrassment at the request, Dana explained to Mathews,

You are too flattering in supposing that I have much influence with either the Dante Society or the Harvard English Department. I am of course glad to do what I can, but I sometimes wonder whether my interference on your behalf might not prove to you more of a liability than an asset. The fact is that both of these organizations look on me as something of an outsider (a sort of Red or Wallaceite) although they have always been very polite. During the thirty-one

years since I was thrown out of Columbia University, they have never seen fit to make me a member of the Council of the Dante Society nor to offer me any sort of job at Harvard. If I am unable to get a position for myself, I doubt whether I would be in a position to help anyone else.⁷⁸

Painful bruises still lay under his skin, but he dutifully explained the complicated organization of modern languages at Harvard before shifting to their common and more congenial interest in Longfellow and Dante. But even on this familiar ground, Dana acknowledged further embarrassment. Taking up the same apologia he had rehearsed years before, he related that the leaders of the Dante Society had been encouraging the expansion of his article from an initial focus on the Dante Club to the full scope of Longfellow's engagement with Dante.⁷⁹ He added that the society had even set aside a small sum of money toward the cost of publication, though he speculated that on account of the length to which his draft had grown, he would probably have to contribute several hundred dollars of his own. "Under these circumstances," he advised Mathews,

I hardly know what to say about your own book on the subject except that I do hope you will go ahead with it regardless of my own article which has now expanded into something of the dimensions of a book. Mine will be buried away among the reports of the Dante Society, where probably only four or five people will read it. Yours, if you get an energetic publisher, who will advertise it widely, might well have a much larger sale. I shall certainly be glad to help you with your book and shall be glad to get help from you on mine. The fact that we should both be writing on almost exact subjects, does not really disturb me, because I think the approach and method will probably be quite different. I believe that it is possible to have a friendly rivalry which really works for the good of both books. For example, Mr. Edgar Richardson, Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, is getting out a book on Washington Allston as I am and we have always given all our information to each other, so that the arrangement has really worked out for mutual benefit. I feel that the same arrangement might be possible in the case of your book and mine on Longfellow and Dante.⁸⁰

Dana also suggested that Mathews might instead write a book on the Dante Club, in which he could then introduce the figures of James Russell Lowell, Charles Eliot Norton, and William Dean Howells. "You might include the readings of the *Vita Nuova* with Norton at Shady Hill and the early days of the Dante Society, in which Lowell and Norton play a larger part than Longfellow," he mused, adding that if Mathews were to take this tack, he himself could concentrate more fully on Longfellow.⁸¹

"Possibly bringing in three or four men on equal footing might excite a better sale than dealing with Longfellow alone," Dana speculated in order to encourage his pursuit of this alternate bearing, for Longfellow "still seems to retain the unpopularity which seems to have surrounded him in recent years."⁸²

In his reply, Mathews thanked Dana for the details concerning Harvard's academic structure. He said that he would write to the chair of Romance Languages and the Summer School director concerning the possibility of a teaching appointment for the following summer, but no offer resulted from these or other attempts.⁸³ Instead, he would arrange to visit Cambridge in conjunction with his attendance at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association, which was to convene that winter in Boston. In response to Dana's suggestions regarding how they might apportion the field of Longfellow and Dante, Mathews returned to his earlier proposal to collaborate on a single book, underscoring that he considered Dana's writing style to be superior—a self-criticism whose verity Dana himself acknowledged in a subsequent letter, noting that the methodology Mathews employed in his dissertation of enumerating references to Dante in a given author's work while "very scholarly . . . might prove a little monotonous and dull in reading."⁸⁴ Dana thus happily consented to the idea of joining their respective talents in a collaborative project, which they could discuss upon Mathews's next visit. "The passages that you culled from the Longfellow journals and letters already form a kind of collaboration," he remarked.

You may remember that I was going to use some of the same passages in a chapter called something like "Echoes of Dante" and, not merely in a footnote, but in the body of the text, mention your help in this matter. I have now, however, decided to break up this chapter and arrange the passages which I hope you and I can find the letters of others to Longfellow, and place these all chronologically. That will make it a little harder to indicate at every point in the text my indebtedness to you; so that perhaps an actual collaboration would really be better. Another point at which your collaboration would help would be in your careful reading and checking of the text, for I think you are far more accurate than I in those matters.⁸⁵

Recalling the reasons why Dana had initially resisted having Mathews work at all with Longfellow's papers, it stands as a singular compliment that he now acknowledged the accuracy of his scholarship, especially in

light of the derisive criticism that he would direct toward another academic who had just published a book on Dante's reception among American authors.

In his last letter, Mathews reported that he had been reading Angelina La Piana's study *Dante's American Pilgrimage: A Historical Survey of Dante Studies in the United States, 1800–1944*.⁸⁶ "I have read more than half of it," he commented, "and it impresses me as a good piece of work, in spite of the little faults I mentioned in my earlier letter."⁸⁷ Noting that Dana had not taken the occasion to comment upon it himself, he asked him directly: "I should be interested to know your reaction to it."⁸⁸ Dana, however, did not respond until some weeks later, when Mathews wrote to him again, requesting that he look over certain sections of a review of the volume that he had been asked to write.⁸⁹

If Dana hesitated intentionally, it might have been because he again felt slighted, though not by Mathews. Indeed, he remarked that he was delighted that Mathews had been asked to write a review since La Piana duly recognized "that the studies on Dante's influence on America are 'mostly by J. C. Mathews.'"⁹⁰ Nonetheless, while appreciating that La Piana's work "evidently involved a great deal of labor," and granting that "in the midst of so many details it is perhaps only natural that there should be some errors," he found it "puzzling" that she never accepted any of Dana's invitations to avail herself of the books and manuscripts at Longfellow House, especially since she lived only a block away.⁹¹ "If she had," he lamented with palpable affront, "she could have saved herself many errors."⁹² On the other hand, he found her expression of thanks at the end of her preface to the staff of "Hutton Library in Harvard University" a self-incriminating and therefore laughable offense.⁹³ He then pointed out more substantial errors, such as her claim that the first edition of Longfellow's translation reproduced Gustave Doré's engravings as illustrations.⁹⁴ "In general," he went on to say,

I feel that she has paid too much attention to curiously inaccurate persons like Lawrance Thompson [whose name he points she misspells as "Lawrence"] and Emilio Goggio (who apparently only looked at one page of Longfellow's lectures on Dante), rather than looking at the manuscripts herself. Again she seems to take an almost malicious delight in quoting the attacks by Sears on Longfellow rather than making a careful study of Longfellow's commentary and illustrations.

"Since she herself has judged so severely," Dana counseled, "you would be justified to judge severely in return." "Almost all of the members of

the Dante Society would be with you in this," he added, as if to egg him on.⁹⁵ "My chief reason for sparing her myself," he explained,

would be my friendship and respect for her brother, George La Piana. I should be inclined to suspect that she was a little jealous at anyone who was not an Italian venturing to write about Dante. Yet when I took some Italian scholars to see her, she was positively rude to them, until her brother George and Professor [Gaetano] Salvemini came in and made up by their graciousness for her lack of it. She is really her own worst enemy and I feel rather sorry for her. I am glad that it is you and not I to whom the lot falls to point out her errors.⁹⁶

In completing his review, Mathews did fulfill the task of pointing out La Piana's errors, while omitting, naturally, Dana's more personal reproaches. He incorporated many of the specific faults that Dana had tallied, and might have included still more, but in the end he had to trim his text from five pages to three.⁹⁷

As he was finishing this assignment, Mathews revived the project he had proposed several years before to publish a compilation of references to Dante in Longfellow's oeuvre. A strong motivation for the project, he admitted to Dana, was the need to fortify his record of publication, as he was soon to be considered for promotion to associate professor.⁹⁸ The long-promised "Echoes of Dante in Longfellow's Poetry" at last appeared in the December 1949 volume of *Italica*. He likewise finished an article on "Thoreau's Reading in Dante" that would come out in the same journal the following summer.⁹⁹ In the meantime, he also consulted with Dana about another project that might be easily done and likewise improve his chances for promotion:

In this connection it occurs to me that I might find some periodical that would be willing to publish an inventory or catalogue of Longfellow's Dante collection. Would you be willing for me to publish such a list, naming you as co-author? I can make up the list, and type it out; and you can check it to see that it is correct. You might also write a paragraph or a page to introduce the list, if you wished. It would make a nice little forerunner of our book, don't you think? According to my count there are about 90 titles; so I guess that there would be about 10 or 12 typed pages.¹⁰⁰

Dana responded that he would be delighted to have such an inventory published, though he thought it would make a "rather dull article."¹⁰¹ Perhaps the editors whom Mathews approached thought so too; the bibliography was not issued until 1971, and only then in the mimeographed

typed pages of the *Emerson Society Quarterly* rather than in a more prominent journal with a larger circulation (of practical value nevertheless, a newly edited version of the same has been included elsewhere in this volume).¹⁰²

This last exchange took place in February 1950. In early April, Mathews sent Dana a case of grapefruit from California, recalling from their last visit the year before that it was his favorite. On April 26, Dana sent Mathews a warm note of thanks in which he mentioned that he had recently been invited by the Italian department at Smith College to lecture on Longfellow and Dante. "It seems to have been very well received," Dana could happily boast. "There was even a summary of it in the Northampton newspaper, which I can lend you, if you would like to read it."¹⁰³ In closing the letter, Dana mentioned that he was still patiently waiting for a response from Mathews regarding the comments he had sent concerning his "Echoes" essay. "I hope you are not too angry by my having quoted some of the criticisms that were made against your article. In the main, of course, I am entirely in sympathy with it."¹⁰⁴ Dana's patience would be left unrewarded. He died the next day from heart failure.

Postscript

Dana's patience would go unrewarded in other ways as well. Having had some warning that his health was deteriorating, he apparently made some provision in his will for Mathews to receive funds toward the completion of his, or rather, *their* book on Longfellow and Dante in the event of his death. Mathews mentioned briefly his astonishment at both Dana's generosity and need for such a bequest in one of his letters at the end of 1948, but the amount of the benefaction or whether it was ever conveyed or used is not known.¹⁰⁵ Mathews never published the volume they had spent so many years discussing, though he did publish a sequel to his "Echoes" essay that examined more closely references to Dante in Longfellow's prose romances "Hyperion" and "Kavanagh."¹⁰⁶ He also added several more articles to his series on the knowledge of Dante among principal American authors based on the reading surveys and methodology he employed in his dissertation. To the early group of essays on Poe, Irving, Bryant, Whitman, and Hawthorne¹⁰⁷ that he published before embarking

on Longfellow, Emerson, and Thoreau, he appended half a dozen more on Melville, Holmes, Whittier, Lowell, Parsons, and Wilde.¹⁰⁸ It seems that the impetus for the second group was once again his professional advancement. He was made full professor at Santa Barbara in 1958, having also served a term as department chair.¹⁰⁹ He was awarded a Fulbright lectureship in Italy for the following year and spent it as visiting professor of American literature at the University of Turin.¹¹⁰

Following the reawakening of the Dante Society in 1954 under the presidency of Charles Singleton, the society once again began issuing its annual reports with accompanying papers on Dante-related topics. To commemorate its founding and early history in conjunction with this renewal of activity, then secretary George Hussey Gifford compiled a lengthy essay on the evolution of the society, comparing its origins to those of the other such associations that were established during the latter part of the nineteenth century and tracing the amplitude of its fortunes through to its incorporation as the Dante Society of America at the conclusion of 1954.¹¹¹ For the sections that concerned Longfellow, the Dante Club, and the initial organization of the society, Gifford incorporated wholesale several paragraphs from the surviving drafts of Dana's "Longfellow and Dante" essay and other details besides, but because Gifford did not attribute any of his sources, Dana's complete essay has languished since, practically unknown and unused by subsequent generations of Dante and Longfellow scholars—the singular exception, perhaps, being Anthony De Vito, who acknowledges having consulted the typescripts at Longfellow House in preparing his centenary history of the Dante Society.¹¹² The plans that Dana had discussed with the society's leaders to issue the essay as a separate publication, if not together with one of the society's annual reports, have only now been realized in the present volume, some sixty years after Dana's death.

Perhaps to complement Gifford's article and make good on at least part of his promise to Dana, Mathews published an essay in the 1958 annual report of the Dante Society that provided a detailed chronicle of "Mr. Longfellow's Dante Club," that acknowledged his indebtedness to Dana.¹¹³ He later edited the proceedings of a symposium on Longfellow held in 1969.¹¹⁴ He himself did not present a paper at the symposium, and none of the contributions consider the question of Longfellow and Dante that had so engrossed Mathews and Dana during their many years of

collaboration. Nevertheless, with the recent revival of interest in Longfellow evidenced by the biographical and critical studies published by Charles Calhoun, Christoph Irmscher, and others around the rededication of Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site in 2002 and the two hundredth anniversary of the Longfellow’s birth in 2009—which the present volume also commemorates—one might expect, and indeed even hope, that the last word on the subject has not yet been written.¹¹⁵

Charlottesville, Virginia

Illustration Sources

1. Building and Grounds Photograph Collection, 1855–1970 (LONG 27885), Collection No. 3008/002.001, Item 003, Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site. Courtesy National Park Service.
2. Portraits of University of California Individuals and Groups (UARC PIC 13: 2665), University Archives, University of California, Berkeley. Reproduced by permission.
3. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana Papers (LONG 17314), Series IX, Collected Materials, box 141, folder 8, Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site. Reproduced with the permission of Robert Bachrach.
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NOTES

1. The controversy also had ramifications for relationships within the family: Longfellow’s son Ernest cut Dana and his brother Allston out of his will on account of their “socialist and pacifist opinions.” See “Longfellow’s Son Cuts Off Nephews / Professor Dana and His Brother Lose \$50,000 Each for ‘Socialist Opinions,’” *New York Times*, October 24, 1922, available from <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FB0B16F93A5D14738DDDAD0A94D8415B828EF1D3> (accessed February 4, 2011).

2. For an extended discussion of this episode and Dana's alleged homosexuality, see Douglass Shand-Tucci, *The Crimson Letter: Harvard, Homosexuality, and the Shaping of American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 129–36.
3. Dana initially published a historical pamphlet, *The Craigie House: The Coming of Longfellow (1837–1841)*, reprinted from the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Historical Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), and later a guide titled *The Longfellow House, History and Guide* (Cambridge, Mass.: privately printed, 1948).
4. Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years before the Mast*, ed. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1946).
5. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, *The Dana Saga: Three Centuries of the Dana Family in Cambridge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge Historical Society, 1941). Following Dana's death in 1950, his secretary, Thomas DeValcourt, posthumously published a longer family history compiled by Dana's paternal aunt, Elizabeth Ellery Dana, with the assistance of the Dana Genealogical Committee as *The Dana Family in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956).
6. For additional background on Dana and the preservation of Longfellow House, see Adam W. Sweeting, "Preserving the Renaissance: Literature and Public Memory in the Homes of Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Poe," *American Studies* 46, no. 1 (2005): 23–43, esp. 31.
7. Mathews to Harvard Librarian [W. B. Briggs], December 2, 1936, Longfellow House Trust (1913–1974) Records, 1852–1973, LONG 16174, box 23, folder 8, "Researcher Records—'Mathews, Chesley,' 1936–1957," Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent correspondence cited is contained in this folder.
8. Walter B. Briggs to Dana, December 9, 1936.
9. Mathews to Dana, December 17, 1936. Emilio Goggio, "Longfellow and Dante," *Thirty-ninth, Fortieth, and Forty-first Annual Reports of the Dante Society (Cambridge, Mass.) [and] Accompanying Papers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, for the Dante Society, 1924), 25–34. In the same year, Goggio also published "The Teaching of Dante in America," *Modern Language Journal* 8, no. 5 (February, 1924): 275–80. Mathews also refers to Samuel Longfellow, ed., *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from his Journals and Correspondence*, 3 vols. (Boston, 1886).
10. Ibid.
11. See note 7 for the present location of these letters.
12. The Dante Society accepted Mathews's 1937 doctoral dissertation, *Dante and Major American Writers, 1800–1867*, as a submission for its annual prize, issuing Mathews an award of seventy-five dollars. See George Benson Weston, "Annual Reports," *Annual Reports of the Dante Society* 55–67 (1951): xiii–xiv.
13. Mathews to Dana, December 12, 1938.
14. See Mathews to Dana, February 8, 1940, and April 4, 1940, and Rudolph Altrocchi to Dana, April 1, 1940.
15. Mathews to Dana, April 18, 1940.
16. Dana to Mathews, May 8, 1940.
17. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, "The Six Centuries Since Dante," in *Essays in Memory of Barrett Wendell by his Assistants*, ed. William R. Castle Jr. and Paul Kaufman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), 41–60.
18. Ibid., 60.
19. Dana to Mathews, May 8, 1940.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Dana to Mathews, July 28, 1948.
23. Dana to Mathews, May 8, 1940.
24. Ibid. Here Dana also remarked that he thought Lawrance Thompson's *Young Longfellow [1807–1843]* (New York: Macmillan, 1938) "not quite so bad," though he still found an average of one error in each letter Thompson transcribed and reproached him for having wanted to quote fragments out of context and twist their meaning. See also note 84, below.
25. Dana to Mathews, May 8, 1940.

26. Ibid. The next most senior descendant by age would have been Dana's cousin Alice Allegra Thorp (1888–1955), but the reference might be to her sister, Annie Longfellow Thorp (1894–1977), since the latter had helped Dana vet the materials that Lawrance Thompson cited and was also named in the agreement that Mathews eventually signed in order to gain access to Longfellow's unpublished manuscripts. See below and note 29.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid. The 1941 annual meeting of the Dante Society would mark the sixtieth anniversary of its founding.

29. Ibid.

30. Mathews to Dana, May 13, 1940.

31. Mathews to Dana, May 14, 1940.

32. Mathews makes a reference to the book in a letter to Dana dated May 27, 1940. The volume was likely Thomas William Parsons, *Letters*, edited by Zoltán Haraszti, with an essay by Austin Warren, reprinted, with additions, from the September, October, November, December 1938 and January 1939 issues of *More Books*, the bulletin of the Boston Public Library (Boston: Trustees of the Public Library, 1940).

33. Mathews to Dana, May 27, 1940. In this reply, Mathews asked Dana whether a clause might be added to the agreement to prevent other researchers, excepting Dana, from publishing on the same topic for a period of three to five years. "If the suggestion is unreasonable," he added, "forget it." In fact, such a clause was not included in the final agreement that Dana signed, dated September 3, 1940.

34. Mathews to Dana, November 8, 1940. See the "Brooks Restores the Fame of Longfellow" section of the article titled "New England Indian Summer," in *Life*, October, 14, 1940, 96–99. The unsigned article represents a review of Van Wyck Brooks, *New England: Indian Summer, 1865–1915*, vol. 4 of *Makers and Finders: A History of the Writer in America, 1800–1915* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1940).

35. Mathews to Dana, November 8, 1940. The article cited by Mathews is Emilio Goggio, "Emerson's Interest in Italy and Italian Literature," *Italica* 17, no. 3 (1940): 97–103.

36. Mathews to Dana, November 8, 1940.

37. See, for example, Mathews to Dana, April 30, 1941.

38. Mathews to Dana, May 6, 1941.

39. Mathews to Dana, May 19, 1941.

40. J. Chesley Mathews, "Echoes of Dante in Longfellow's Poetry," *Italica* 26, no. 4 (1949): 242–59.

41. For more on the history of the Dante Society during the interwar years, see George H. Gifford, "A History of the Dante Society," *Seventy-Fourth Annual Report of the Dante Society, with Accompanying Papers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Dante Society of America, 1956), 25–27; Weston, "Annual Reports," xiii–xv; and Anthony J. De Vito, "The First Hundred Years of the Dante Society," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 100 (1982): 105–106.

42. Dana to Mathews, May 21, 1941. The first meeting of the Dante Society was held in Longfellow's study on Friday evening, February 11, 1881. See Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, "Longfellow and Dante," elsewhere in this issue.

43. Dana to Mathews, May 21, 1941.

44. It is possible that the paper that Dana read survives as an eight-page typescript titled "The Dante Club," which is found among the pages of what otherwise represents an early draft of the longer essay that Dana would later write on "Longfellow and Dante." See Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, "Longfellow and Dante," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana Papers, LONG 17314, box 129, folder 5, subfolder "1880 Dante Society," Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

45. Dana to Mathews, May 21, 1941. Vincenzo Cioffari, "The Conception of Fortune and Fate in the Works of Dante" (Cambridge, Mass.: Dante Society of Cambridge, Mass., 1940).

46. Dana to Mathews, May 21, 1941.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.
49. Ibid. Mathews had asked Dana for a copy of his paper in a letter dated April 30, 1941.
50. Dana to Mathews, June 27, 1941.
51. Ibid.
52. Dana to Mathews, September 8, 1941.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Mathews to Dana, January 8, 1942.
56. Ibid.
57. From 1941 through to the last full year of his presidency in 1953, Robinson held all annual meetings of the society in his home at 6 Longfellow Park. See Weston, "Annual Reports," xiii; and George H. Gifford, "Annual Reports," *Annual Reports of the Dante Society*, 68–72 (1954): ix.
58. Ralph Waldo Emerson, trans., "Dante's *Vita nuova*," autograph manuscript, signed, [July 1843], MS Am 1280.216, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
59. Mathews to Dana, April 23, 1942. J. Chesley Mathews, "Emerson's Knowledge of Dante," *University of Texas Studies in English*, 22 (1942): 171–98. The article was based largely on research that Mathews had done for his 1937 dissertation. See also Matthew Pearl, "'Colossal Cipher': Emerson as America's Lost Dantean," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 117 (1999): 171–93, esp. 172.
60. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Dante's Vita Nuova*, ed. J. Chesley Mathews, *Harvard Library Bulletin* 11 (1957): 208–44, 346–62. The Emerson Memorial Association reprinted the two-part series as a booklet in December 1957, and it was reprinted again by the University of North Carolina Press as number 26 in its "Studies in Comparative Literature" series. For a report of the 1954 annual meeting of the Dante Society, see Gifford, "Annual Reports," ix–x.
61. Dana to Mathews, May 20, 1942.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Mathews to Dana, June 4, 1942.
65. Mathews to Dana, August 2, 1942, and August 9, 1942.
66. Mathews to Dana, September 15, 1942. Dana followed through on this request, writing separate but nearly identical letters to Dante Society president Fred Norris Robinson and secretary George Weston on September 20, 1942. On the same date, Dana also wrote to Houghton Library director William A. Jackson to ask whether Houghton might serve a venue for a larger annual meeting of the Dante Society, including Emerson scholars and the display of the book that the Library expects to publish on Emerson (presumably the edition of Emerson's *Vita Nuova* translation that Mathews would eventually produce). Jackson responded favorably on September 23, 1942, but as noted above, such a meeting would not be held until 1954.
67. Mathews to Dana, October 20, 1942. The research correspondence folder also includes several versions of the Mathews's Guggenheim proposal and other related correspondence.
68. Mathews to Dana, February 27, 1943.
69. See Dana to Mathews, November 28, 1942, which makes reference to a letter of Mathews from November 24, which is not found in the correspondence folder.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid. Dana did not publish any of the papers that he describes in this paragraph, nor does the collection of his papers at Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site appear to contain any drafts.
73. Mathews to Dana, January 15, 1943.
74. Manning Hawthorne and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, *The Origin and Development of Longfellow's "Evangeline"* (Portland, Maine: Anthoensen Press, 1947), reprinted from the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 41, no. 3 (1947): 165–203.
75. See note 3.

76. Mathews to Dana, May 8, 1948. As Dana did not preserve copies of many of his outgoing letters, it is not possible to say whether it was he or Mathews who initiated the less formal salutation. The next of Dana's letters to Mathews that has been preserved, dated July 28, 1948, opens with "Dear Chesley."

77. Mathews to Dana, July 24, 1948.

78. Dana to Mathews, July 28, 1948. Oddly, De Vito, "First Hundred Years of the Dante Society," 121, includes Dana in his list of Members of the Council of the Dante Society.

79. See above and note 42.

80. Dana to Mathews, July 28, 1948. See Edgar Preston Richardson, *Washington Allston: A Study of the Romantic Artist in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), which includes a catalog of Allston's paintings compiled by Richardson and Dana, and Dana's own article, "Allston in Cambridgeport 1830-1843," Cambridge Historical Society, Publication 29, *Proceedings for the Year 1943* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge Historical Society, 1943), 13-67. Dana's extensive collection of Allston materials is preserved at Longfellow House - Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, LONG 20258. Dana inherited responsibilities as a trustee of the Washington Allston Trust from his father, Richard Henry Dana III, who in turn had received them from his father, Richard Henry Dana Jr.

81. Dana to Mathews, July 28, 1948.

82. Ibid.

83. Mathews to Dana, August 22, 1948.

84. Dana to Mathews, August 26, 1948. Dana had levied a similar criticism in the stern letter of May 8, 1940, that he addressed to Mathews in response to his initial inquiries: "Thank you for calling my attention to the articles which you have already published. I find that they have been done on [*sic*] a very careful and scholarly way,—far more scholarly, for example, than the methods used by Goggio or Thompson. I have not had time yet to go into them thoroughly, though I have noticed one or two mistakes which may be merely misprints and what seems to be an unfortunate tendency on your part to draw the conclusion that, if you do not have happened to run across a reference to something, no such references ever existed. When we realize what a small portion a man's thoughts or conversations ever get written down in letters and what a small proportion of the letters of any author are preserved or are accessible, it seems to me very rash to state that such and such an author referred to Dante so many times, to the 'Divina Commedia' so many times, to the 'Vita Nuova' so many times. Such statistics would be of value only if we had everything that a man had ever written completely recorded. Nonetheless your work seems objective and scientific and so you seem to be resisting the temptation of special pleading or of sensationalism. This has made a favorable impression on me and I think will also make a favorable impression on other members of the Longfellow family, although some of them may feel it is a little too mathematical for a literary subject."

85. Ibid.

86. Angelina La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage: A Historical Survey of Dante Studies in the United States, 1800-1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press for Wellesley College, 1948).

87. Mathews to Dana, August 22, 1948. The earlier letter that Mathews mentions is missing from the folder that Dana maintained of their correspondence.

88. Ibid.

89. Mathews to Dana, October 9, 1948. With this letter Mathews sent two typewritten pages containing his criticisms of La Piana's treatment of Longfellow. His completed review was published in *American Literature* 21, no. 3 (1949): 373-75.

90. Dana to Mathews, October 15, 1948. See La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage*, 274.

91. Dana to Mathews, October 15, 1948.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid. See La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage*, viii.

94. Dana to Mathews, October 15, 1948. See La Piana, *Dante's American Pilgrimage*, 290.

95. Dana to Mathews, October 15, 1948.

96. Ibid.

97. See Mathews to Dana, December 21, 1949.

98. Mathews to Dana, October 23, 1948. See note 40 for the complete citation.
99. J. Chesley Mathews, "Thoreau's Reading in Dante," *Italica* 27, no. 2 (1950): 77–81. Mathews refers to completing the article in a letter to Dana dated March 22, 1949.
100. Mathews to Dana, February 2, 1950.
101. Dana to Mathews, February 6, 1950.
102. J. Chesley Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," *ESQ (Emerson Society Quarterly): A Journal of the American Renaissance*, no. 62 (Winter 1971): 10–22.
103. Dana to Mathews, April 26, 1950.
104. Ibid. Dana neglected to include a copy of his previous letter, in which he discussed the criticisms of Mathews's article, in his correspondence file.
105. Mathews to Dana, November 19, 1948: "I do not know how to express to you my gratitude for your generous provision to leave me a gift to help me finish the Longfellow-Dante book in case you do not get to finish it. Of course I care, very much, to see that the work gets finished, and I promise you that I will complete the work if anything prevents you from doing it. But it startles me to have you mention not having long to live; I hope you have not been feeling ill. With all my heart I hope that you still have a good many years to live." Dana does not mention the provision or any problems with his health in any of his letters to Mathews for which he retained copies.
106. J. Chesley Mathews, "Echoes of Dante in Longfellow's 'Hyperion' and 'Kavanagh,'" *Italica* 28, no. 1 (1951): 17–18.
107. "Did Poe Read Dante?" *University of Texas English Studies* 18 (1938): 123–36; "Washington Irving's Knowledge of Dante," *American Literature* 10 (1938/1939): 480–83; "Bryant's Knowledge of Dante," *Italica* 16, no. 4 (1939): 115–19; "Walt Whitman's Reading of Dante," *University of Texas English Studies* 19 (1939): 172–9; "Hawthorne's Knowledge of Dante," *University of Texas English Studies* 20 (1940): 157–65.
108. "Melville's Reading of Dante," *Furman Studies*, n.s., 6 (Fall 1958): 1–8, represented an expansion of "Melville and Dante," *PMLA* 64, no. 5 (1949): 1238. Mathews also published a series of essays in *Italica*, the journal of the American Association of Teachers of Italian, as he had done earlier in the *University of Texas English Studies*: "Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes and Dante," *Italica* 34, no. 3 (1957): 127–36; "Dr. Holmes and Dante: A Postscript," *Italica* 35, no. 1 (1958): 10; "Whittier's Knowledge of Dante," *Italica* 34, no. 4 (1957): 234–8; "James Russell Lowell's Interest in Dante," *Italica* 36, no. 2 (1959): 77–100; "Dantean Influence in the Poems of T. W. Parsons," *Italica* 42, no. 1 (1965): 135–68; "Richard Henry Wilde's Knowledge of Dante," *Italica* 45, no. 1 (1968): 28–46. This series also included a postscript to his earlier article on Bryant's knowledge of Dante: "Bryant and Dante: A Word More," *Italica* 35, no. 3 (1958): 176. Mathews later recapitulated the entire series in a lecture titled "The Interest in Dante Shown by Nineteenth-Century Men of Letters," for a symposium held at the Library of Congress on May 1, 1965, to commemorate the six hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dante. Mathews's lecture (together with the papers read by John Ciardi and Francis Fergusson) was broadcast, and appeared in the published proceedings: *Dante Alighieri: Three Lectures* (Washington, D.C.: Gertrude Clarke Whittall Poetry and Literature Fund, for the Library of Congress, 1965), 1–22. Mathews presented the same lecture two weeks later at the expanded annual meeting of the Dante Society held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 15–16, 1965. See also De Vito, "First Hundred Years of the Dante Society," 111. It was also republished in *Studi Americani* 11 (1965): 77–104. Mathews later offered an abbreviated form of the lecture at the 1976 meeting of the Modern Language Association, which was subsequently published as "An Historical Overview of American Writers' Interest in Dante, (to about 1900)," in *Dante's Influence on American Writers*, ed. Anne Paolucci (New York: Published for the Dante Society of America by Griffon House Publications, 1977), 13–21.
109. For these and other details concerning Mathew's career and biography, see Patrick McCarthy and Robert Erickson, "In Memoriam Joseph Chesley Mathews" (Oakland, Calif.: University of California Academic Senate, 2001), available from <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/inmemoriam/JosephChesleyMathews.htm> [sic] (accessed December 12, 2010).
110. According to McCarthy and Erickson, "shorter Fulbright commitments took him to the Universities of Bologna and Venice, and he lectured as well for the United States Information Service

and the Consiglio per gli Studi Americani in Rome and Palermo." McCarthy and Erickson also note that Mathews served as a Council Associate of the Dante Society from 1971–1975 and later became a life member. In 1975 the Republic of Italy inducted Mathews into its Order of Merit, bestowing upon him the title of "Cavaliere." Mathews retired from teaching in 1974 and died in 2001 at the age of 95.

111. George H. Gifford, "A History of the Dante Society," *Seventy-Fourth Annual Report of the Dante Society, with Accompanying Papers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Dante Society of America, 1956): 3–27. The paragraphs that Gifford lifted from Dana's essay are found on pages 5–8. For details, see the notes in the edited version of Dana's essay that appears elsewhere in this volume.

112. De Vito, "First Hundred Years of the Dante Society," 118 and 3 n. 3.

113. J. Chesley Mathews, "Mr. Longfellow's Dante Club," *Annual Reports of the Dante Society, with Accompanying Papers* 76 (1958): 23–35. In an initial note, Mathews writes, "This essay is intended to supplement and at certain points to correct previously published accounts of the Dante Club. It is based chiefly upon manuscript Journals, letters, and other papers in the Longfellow House. The present writer is indebted to the late Dr. H. W. L. Dana, who arranged for him to have access to such manuscript materials, and to both Dr. Dana and his secretary, Mr. Thomas H. DeValcourt, for their generous assistance rendered in many ways."

114. *Henry W. Longfellow Reconsidered, A Symposium*, ed. J. Chesley Mathews (Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1970).

115. Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); Christoph Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Christoph Irmscher, *Public Poet, Private Man: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at 200* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009).

Longfellow and Dante

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW DANA

edited by CHRISTIAN Y. DUPONT

Editor's Note

Presented here is an edited transcription of a previously unpublished essay, composed during the 1940s, that survives in the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana Papers in the archives of Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site in Cambridge, Massachusetts.¹ For historical background on the essay, see my introduction elsewhere in this volume, "Chronicling Longfellow's Interest in Dante: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana and Joseph Chesley Mathews."

The transcription is based primarily on the typescript pages gathered in a folder labeled "Manuscript" (box 129, folder 6). The pages are numbered and in sequence, but gaps in the numbering and discontinuities between pages indicated that some pages were missing from this folder. Copies of these pages were found in an adjacent folder, labeled, "Early Draft of Manuscript" (box 129, folder 5). This folder also contained copies of some pages found in folder 6 in what, in most cases, appeared to be earlier versions, though all together they did not constitute a complete version. Many of the pages in both folders include handwritten corrections and other notes. Because the variants were relatively few and minor, I opted for a simpler method than formal diplomatic transcription. In reconstructing the text, I transcribed the pages found in folder 6, integrating any missing pages from those available in folder 5. In so doing, I referred to Dana's working table of contents, found at the front of folder 5, to ensure proper sequence (with one variation: see note 136). I also incorporated any handwritten corrections and insertions that Dana had

entered on the pages I transcribed, though I generally did not make note of any other annotations or marginalia. Only when I observed a significant variant between a page from folder 6 for which there was also a copy in folder 5 did I describe the variant in a note. I otherwise corrected and regularized spelling, punctuation, and capitalization while preserving original paragraph breaks.

Dana's essay is largely constructed from quotations from Longfellow's journals, correspondence, and other sources. Yet because he did not consider it a scholarly production (as evidenced by correspondence quoted in my introductory essay), he did not include any footnotes or formal citations. In the footnotes I have supplied, however, I have endeavored to provide citations for every source. In cases where Dana quotes material that has been edited and published, I cite the standard version though I have preserved Dana's own transcriptions since he worked directly from the original sources. In some instances, particularly with quotations of Longfellow's poetry, Dana's transcriptions exhibit variants with respect to standard editions. I have noted some of the more significant departures but chose to leave a close and exhaustive comparison to the interested reader.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Gigliola Cortesi for preparing the initial transcription of Dana's original typescripts. I am also grateful to Anita Israel, archives specialist at Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, for her hospitality during my several visits, for answering my innumerable questions, and for supplying many of the images used as illustrations. I am furthermore grateful to site manager James M. Shea and the National Park Service for permission to publish Dana's essay, which I hope students of both Longfellow and Dante will find informative and useful.

Charlottesville, Virginia

Early Longing for Italy, 1819–1826

During the cold of winter in his boyhood home at Portland, Maine, Longfellow seems to have felt at an early age a romantic longing for the warmth and poetry of Italy. This longing led him gradually step by step to its culmination in his devotion to the *Divine Comedy* of Dante.

In the old house in Portland where he was brought up were kept the vellum-bound journals in which his uncle, Henry Wadsworth, for whom

he had been named, had written descriptions of the Italian towns which he had visited and drawn sketches of some of the scenes which he had looked at there.² Some of the books bought by this uncle in Italy were given to his young namesake, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and it may well have been this same uncle who had sent landscapes which enlivened the walls of the sitting room and den, and which seem to have haunted the imagination of the young Longfellow and inspired some of his earliest verses.

Among the books in the library of Longfellow's father, who had been educated at Harvard College, the young boy found many in which Italy was described in glowing terms. It is doubtful whether he came upon Dante's *Divine Comedy* at so early an age; but the English poets, whom he loved to read, constantly evoked echoes of Italy. In Milton, he read of the "Autumnal leaves that strow the brooks in Vallombrosa."³ The fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, in which Byron gives his glowing description of Italy, appeared when Longfellow was nine years old and still further kindled his enthusiasm for everything Italian.⁴ In his copy-books, kept at the Portland Academy when he was twelve, he carefully copied two poems by Samuel Rogers on Italy, and an early biographer of Longfellow, not recognizing these as by Rogers, mistook them for Longfellow's own earliest effusions.⁵

A year or two later, the young Longfellow did write two similar poems of his own. Both of these reveal a curious combination of memories of descriptions of Italian scenery in English poems with impressions made by the Italian paintings in his home and betray a somewhat confused picture of Italian geography.

The first poem, called "Italian Scenery," began:

Night rests in beauty on Mont Alto.
Beneath its shade the beauteous Arno sleeps
In Vallombrosa's bosom, and dark trees
Bend with a calm and quiet shadow down
Upon the beauty of that silent river.⁶

The poem then proceeded to bring into this same picture a gondola, Tivoli, Abruzzi, the Imperial city, and the Sabine Hills. These verses appeared first when Longfellow was seventeen years old in *The United States Library Gazette* for December 15, 1824, and—with local pride in

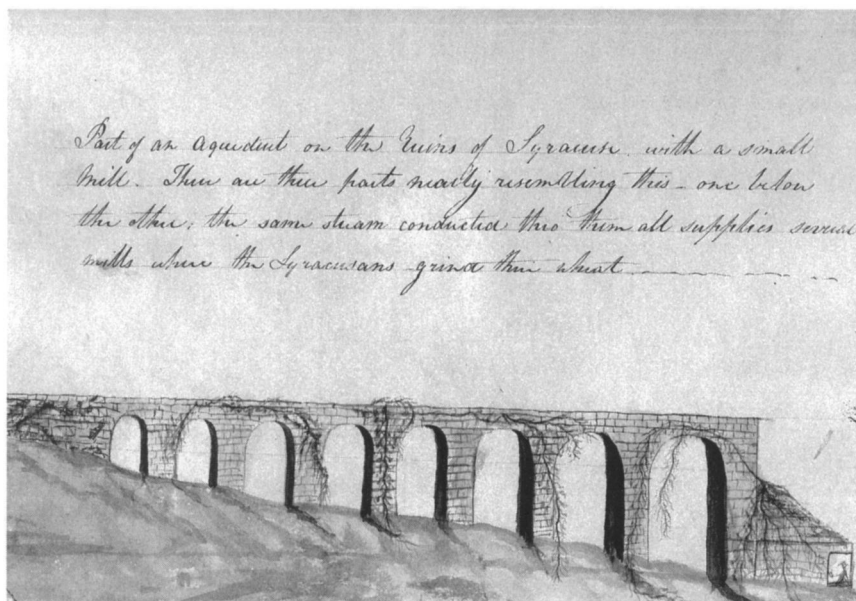


Fig. 1: Sketch of an aqueduct near Syracuse, Italy, drawn by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's uncle, in the journal he kept while traveling in the Mediterranean in 1802–1803.

the young poet—were duly reprinted in *The Portland Advertiser* for December 29, 1824, and *The Gazette of Maine* for January 1, 1825.

In the second poem, “The Venetian Gondolier,” the gondola is properly located in Venice, but the gondolier is made curiously ambidextrous since, apparently at one and the same time, he is represented as plying and stringing his tuneful viol, “Whilst in her cell the novice sighs / Her vespers to her rosary.”⁷ These lines were first printed in *The United States Literary Gazette* for January 15, 1825, and were duly reprinted in *The Portland Advertiser* for February 2, and *The Gazette of Maine* for February 8 of the same year.

Both poems had been signed by the three initials, “H. W. L.,” and in an unpublished manuscript memorandum Longfellow lists them both among his earliest poems.⁸ Later, however, after he had come to know Italy at first hand, he never thought either of these youthful efforts as worthy of being reprinted in any of his collected works, or even in his *Poems of Places*.⁹

Even at their time of publication, the young Longfellow was evidently not satisfied with his secondhand contact with Italy and Italian literature.

On December 5, 1824, before either of these poems had been published, Longfellow had written to his father of his desire for “acquiring a knowledge of the Italian Language, without an acquaintance with which I shall be cut out from one of the most beautiful departments of letters.”¹⁰

He used to watch the ships come sailing into Portland harbor from Italy and other European countries, and down by the black wharves he liked to hear the sailors speaking of their foreign lands.

In 1826, the year after the publication of these youthful poems, Longfellow sailed abroad and remained there for three years. Arriving in Paris, he was not content with studying French but set to work learning Italian from a certain Signore de Ferranti, who later became guitarist to the king of the Belgians. Had not the younger English poets who had died in the last five years—Keats, Shelley, Byron—all been drawn from England by the lure of Italy? Had not the great German poet Goethe, who was still living, been profoundly influenced by his *Italienische Reise*?¹¹ Had not Madame de Stael explained all great literature as the longing of the North for the South?¹²

From the cold of winter in the north of France we find Longfellow at the age of nineteen writing to his father on December 23, 1826: “With how much delight I shall leave the populous and noisy streets of Paris for the sunny regions of the south and the eternal Summer of the Italian valleys!”¹³

First Visit in Italy, 1827–1828

When Longfellow finally entered Italy, he was fortunate enough to have as his companion another young American, George Washington Greene. His grandfather, General Nathaniel Greene and Longfellow’s grandfather, General Wadsworth, had both served under Washington in the American Revolution. Between the two grandsons, drawn together by their common love of Italy and later of Dante, there grew up a companionship which ripened into a lifelong friendship. They entered Genoa together on Christmas Eve, 1827, and stood on a terrace overlooking the sea by moonlight—a scene which Longfellow introduced later into *The Golden Legend*.¹⁴

A few weeks before entering Italy, Greene had bought in Paris a little three-volume edition of Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, which had been published there by Antonio Buttura in 1820. In this, there was a portrait of

Dante as a frontispiece, and, at the beginning of the three volumes, engraved plans of the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso*.

Finding how much his companion seemed to cherish these little books, Greene presented them to him with an inscription saying: "G.W.Greene to his friend H.W.Longfellow" and adding the date: "11 April 1828."¹⁵ Longfellow seems at once to have drunk deep from these volumes, marking certain passages in the poem and writing in the margin, feeling that this voice from out of the past had opened up whole new vistas of thought before him for the future.

It was at this time, that in the midst of a beautiful Italian sunset, Longfellow resolved to devote himself to a life of scholarship and literature. It was this occasion that Greene remembered long after when he wrote to Longfellow in a letter of April 3, 1867:

You and I were together at Naples . . . laying up those precious associations which are youth's best preparation for age. We were young then, with life all before us; and, in the midst of the records of a great past our thoughts would still turn to our own future. Yet even in looking forward, they caught the coloring of that past . . . Evening was coming on with a sweet promise of the stars; and our minds and hearts were so full that we could not think of shutting ourselves up in our rooms, or of mingling with the crowd on the Toledo. We wanted to be alone, and yet to feel that there was life all around us. We went up to the flat roof of the house, where, as we walked, we could look down into the crowded street, and out upon the wonderful bay, and across the bay to Ischia and Capri and Sorrento, and over the house-tops and villas and vineyards to Vesuvius . . . Over all, with the thrill like that of solemn music, fell the splendor of the Italian sunset. We talked and mused by turns, till the twilight deepened and the stars came forth to mingle their mysterious influence with the overmastering magic of the scene. It was then that you unfolded to me your plans of life, and showed me from what "deep cisterns" you had already learned to draw.¹⁶

Longfellow too never forgot that moment of inspiration and dedication that came to him in Italy, and in *The Golden Legend* spoke of

Its memory, that, like a summer sunset,
Encircles with a ring of purple light
All the horizon of my youth.¹⁷

In Rome, after daytimes spent in visiting churches and galleries, and evenings spent in gatherings with artists and authors, Longfellow tells us in *Outre-Mer*: "At midnight, when the crowd is gone, I retire to my

chamber, and, poring over the gloomy pages of Dante . . . protract my nightly vigil till the morning star is in the sky.”¹⁸

Later on in making his way along the Adriatic coast, we read in his journal for December 11, 1828: “Rimini—the very name recalls the melancholy fate of Francesca da Rimini.”¹⁹ In his notebook he quotes in Italian the familiar lines from the *Inferno* beginning: “Noi leggevamo un giorno per diletto,” illustrating them with a pencil sketch of his own representing the lovers, Francesca and Paolo, surprised and killed by the husband, Gianciotto.²⁰

In Venice, “the city of silence floating on the sea,”²¹ his gondolier, who only five years earlier had been the gondolier for Lord Byron and had written poems in the Venetian dialect to both Byron and Longfellow, recited to him verses from Tasso’s *Jerusalem Delivered*.²²

Teaching Italian, 1829–1837

On returning to America and preparing for his college students there a *Syllabus de la Grammaire Italienne*, Longfellow could not resist the temptation of working into these grammatical exercises the same passage from Dante about Francesca (*Inf.* 5.112–42) that he had quoted at Rimini,²³ and some of the lines from Tasso that his gondolier had sung to him in Venice.²⁴

In another textbook, *Saggi de’ Novellieri Italiani*, Longfellow wrote in Italian in his preface, saying that he well knew how hard a ladder one had to climb to accustom oneself to a foreign language and quoted the familiar line from this same passage in Dante: “Ben so, e lo dico ‘come colui che piange e dice,’ ben so che è dura scala l’innoltrarsi in una lingua straniera.”²⁵

On September 2, 1830, in delivering his inaugural address at Bowdoin College on the “Origin and Growth of the Languages of Southern Europe and of their Literature,” Professor Longfellow paid his glowing tribute to the role that Dante’s *Divine Comedy* has played in stabilizing and elevating the Italian language: “The all immortal Dante, the father of Italian song, gave it stability and permanency by building with its rude materials an edifice whose foundations were as broad and deep as the foundations of the world itself, and whose top pierced the heaven of heavens.”²⁶

In "Defence of Poetry," published in *The North American Review* for January 1832, Longfellow spoke of Dante as one of the "poets and scholars, whose minds were bathed in song, and yet not weakened: men who severally carried forward the spirit of their age, who soared upward on the wings of poetry and yet were not unfitted to penetrate the deepest recesses of the human soul in search of the hidden treasures of wisdom, and the secret springs of thought, feeling, and action."²⁷

In Longfellow's long and learned article on the "History of the Italian Language and Dialects," published in the *North American Review* for October 1832, he refers constantly to Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* and the innumerable dialects of the different parts of Italy and, in speaking of the unity which the Italian language finally achieved in the three great writers of Trecento—Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio—said: "Beneath their culture, the tree, whose far-spreading roots drew nourishment from the soil of every province, reared aloft its leafy branches to the sky, vocal with song, and proffered shelter to all who deigned to sit beneath its shadow and listen to the laughing tale, the amorous lay, or the fearful mysteries of another life."²⁸

Later, when Professor Longfellow came to Cambridge in the winter of 1836–1837, to take charge of the teaching of Modern Languages at Harvard College, he kept a notebook bound in green leather in which he entered the names of the students in these subjects—among others the names of Henry Thoreau and James Russell Lowell.²⁹

Thoreau may have received better marks than Lowell in German (167 points to 153). Lowell, on the other hand, was rather better than Thoreau in Italian (132 points to 99). In the letters written by Lowell as an undergraduate, Lowell showed himself sufficiently familiar with Dante to quote him—or perhaps we should say misquote him in Italian. Writing on August 9, 1838, somewhat ungrammatically, "mezzo cammin del nostro vita"—though perhaps the mistake here may be that of the later editor or printer rather than that of the nineteen-year-old boy.³⁰

When Lowell in this same year, published his "Class Poem," he sent a copy to Professor Longfellow, who congratulated him kindly on this poetry.³¹ It was the future Mrs. Longfellow who was, as Lowell said, "the first stranger who ever said a kind word to me about my poems."³² Another bond of sympathy was that young Lowell's aunt, Miss Sarah Champney Lowell, was at that time occupying the other spare room in Craigie House and was sharing her meals with Professor Longfellow. She

was “a lady already under the eaves of seventy, but with the figure and vivacity of a girl of seventeen”—“a good deal like [a] fly, brisk and buzzy.”³³ Between her and Longfellow there had grown up a delightful companionship, and often her nephew James Russell Lowell would drop in to “Castle Craigie,”³⁴ which was just half way up Brattle Street from the College to Elmwood, in order to see “Aunt Sally.”³⁵ Thus, through these various connections, began the forty-year friendship between Longfellow and Lowell.

Charles Eliot Norton, who was to form with Longfellow and Lowell the triumvirate of the Dante Club, was only a boy of nine years of age at this time when Professor Longfellow first came to teach at Harvard. Yet Longfellow often walked through Norton’s woods to Shady Hill to converse with Norton’s parents and took an interest in the future studies of the young boy. Young Norton always treasured highly a book which Professor Longfellow had presented him with at that time. Mrs. Norton, with her smooth hair drawn down on either side of her forehead in what was called “curtain fashion,” and with a black velvet band across her forehead, sitting on the sofa in the front parlor at Shady Hill, took a most kindly interest to the young professor of *belles lettres* who had so recently came [*sic*] to Cambridge and consoled him when he seemed unhappy. In his disappointment and loneliness Longfellow wrote in his journal for May 2, 1840: “Came back to Cambridge and went to soothe my wounded heart at Mrs. Norton’s. There I beheld what perfect happiness may exist on this earth; and felt how I stood alone in life, cut off for a while from those dearest sympathies, after which I longed.”³⁶

As Charles Sumner wrote Henry Cleveland on November 29, 1842, of Shady Hill and the Nortons: “Longfellow haunts their grove with constant pleasure.”³⁷ Long afterwards, at the time of Mrs. Norton’s death, Charles Eliot Norton wrote to Longfellow saying of his mother: “Her affection for you was constant, and is inherited.”³⁸

It was only eight years later than Lowell that Norton was to become a student in Longfellow’s course on Dante. These two former students of Longfellow’s, Lowell and Norton, were to grow up to form with him the nucleus of the Dante Club of the 1860s, were in turn, the one after the other, to succeed him in giving the Dante course at Harvard, and were at the end of his life to form the Dante Society, of which each in turn succeeded him as president.

Lectures on Dante, 1838–1841

During Professor Longfellow's first year at Harvard, the two courses of lectures which he gave were devoted one to "The History of Literature in the North of Europe" and the other to "Goethe's *Faust*." It was only in his second year that he was able to turn with no little delight to Dante. He chose to deal particularly with the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* since he had come to like them more than the *Inferno*, which he was glad to hand over to his Italian assistant. To Miss Mary Appleton, he wrote on December 10, 1837, saying how glad he was to pass from "Heathen Goethe" to "Christian Dante," adding that with the beginning of the new year, "I begin Dante—that is the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, to please my imagination with sweeter visions than the *Inferno*; which with all its horrors I make over to Dr. Bachi forever. I am tired of *Infernos*."³⁹

In these lectures, he tried to be as impersonal as possible and focused the attention of the students on Dante himself. Occasionally, however, Professor Longfellow revealed something of his own personal reactions toward Dante and the *Divine Comedy*. For example, in an introductory lecture on the "Life of Dante," which he wrote out on January 15, 1838, he speaks of how he himself had been impressed by Dante's features:

That sorrowful countenance, which looks at us from the title-page, with the grief-stricken, mournful expression of a great soul, at war with fate. This countenance haunts me wherever I go. Indeed, I never read a passage of the Divine Poem which does not seem to me uttered by those solemn, silent lips! And this it is, which to my mind gives every word of it, such truth, such reality, such earnestness; as if the Vision itself had been no vision, but an actual passage in the Poet's life!⁴⁰

Again, in a lecture on the *Divina Commedia* which he finished writing on May 22, 1838, at midnight, he encourages any Dante students who may be deterred by some of the less interesting cantos by telling them how he himself had only gradually come to recognize the greatness of Dante:

When I first read this poem, I confess, I had not faith in the great poet. I feared how it might end, beginning so gloriously. But as I advanced, I was undeceived and put at rest. Throughout he bears himself so valiantly, that I could but wonder more and more, not only at his great, but his continuous power. The style rises with the theme, and swells like tide-waters, and at length at its flood lifts the

reader, freighted with doubts and fears from some shallower canto, upon which he may have been stranded.⁴¹

In the following year, he was able to devote the whole spring term of 1839, consisting of thirty-five lectures, all to the *Purgatorio* alone, which enabled him to devote an entire lecture to each canto, with an introductory lecture at the beginning and a concluding lecture at the end. Thus for three or four years, he alternated between Goethe and Dante, with an occasional course on Spanish drama thrown in. As a rule, he led his students into the intricacies of both parts of Goethe's *Faust* in the darkening days of autumn and winter and then, with the coming of the spring months, led them out into the sunlight and up the joyous sides of the Mountain of Purgatory towards the Earthly Paradise at its top.

For these purposes, he interleaved his copy of Goethe's *Faust* and his four volumes of Dante.⁴² This enabled him to jot down on the blank pages bits of translation and various comments and parallels that he came upon in his reading of the literatures of various ages and various countries.

It was from these translations of his in blank verse on the interleaved pages of his *Purgatorio* that he selected certain passages to include among his other translations in his first book of poems, *Voices of the Night*, published in December, 1839.⁴³ To these fragments of translation he gave the titles: "The Celestial Pilot" (*Purg.* 2.13–51), "The Terrestrial Paradise" (*Purg.* 28.1–33), and "Beatrice" (*Purg.* 30.13–33, 85–99, and 31.13–21).

In the month following the publication of his first version of translations from Dante, Longfellow went to New York in order to give two lectures on Dante at the Mercantile Library: one on January 24, 1840, on the *Purgatorio*, and one three days later, on January 27, on the *Paradiso*.⁴⁴

The reception given to *Voices of the Night* and to his New York lectures might seem, on the surface, to indicate a certain success. In reality, however, Longfellow was far from being satisfied with his accomplishments either as a scholar or as a poet. He was, perhaps, too much of a poet to be a really great scholar, and too much of a scholar to be a truly great poet. Moreover, he was distracted from his work, either as a poet or a scholar, by an all-absorbing love that seemed not to be returned and was tearing him asunder.

Mezzo Cammin, 1842–1861

Going abroad in 1842 to recover his health, Longfellow realized that he was now thirty-five years old. Half of the "threescore years and ten"

allotted to man had passed. He was, like Dante, “Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita.”

As he wrote in his journal on Thursday, August 25: “I composed a Sonnet to-day; suggested by many meditations and beginning ‘Half of my Life is gone’; & c.”⁴⁵ He later rewrote this sonnet several times, modifying it a good deal and calling it in one draft “Mezzo Cammin,” but, perhaps because he felt it was something too intimate, he never published it during his lifetime. Let me quote this sonnet, as in the case of his other sonnets, in the form in which Longfellow originally wrote it. Like Dante, filled with sorrow and remorse, he seemed to have lost his way; but he was resolute to accomplish something yet in what remained to him of life before his death. He was in Germany at Marienberg on the Rhine and had ascended part way up the Mount of Mary at sunset, looking down at the city on the bank of the Rhine below him where one by one the lights were being lit, while in the silence he could hear behind him the sound of a waterfall further up the mountainside.⁴⁶

Half of my life is past; and I have let
The years glide from me, and have not fulfilled
The dream and promise of my Youth; to build
Some lofty Rhyme, the World could not forget.
Not Indolence, nor weakness, but the fret
Of youthful passions, that would not be stilled
And sorrow and a care that almost killed,
Kept me from what I shall accomplish yet.
Here in the air serene I see the Past
Lying beneath me with its sound and sights,
A city in the twilight, dim and vast,
With smoking roofs, and bells and kindling lights,
And in the stillness 'round me hear at last
The cataract of Death far thundering from the heights.

Marienberg on the Rhine
August 25, 1842⁴⁷

On his voyage home across the Atlantic, Longfellow nearly met death face to face. A great storm struck his ship. Many on board were injured. He was in the forward part of the vessel, where the great waves struck and broke with voices of thunder. In the stateroom next to his, the man died, and Longfellow lay in his bunk prostrate through fifteen stormy,

sleepless nights. It was then, feeling that he was returning to a country already being torn asunder by the coming conflict of North and South, that he composed his *Poems on Slavery*.⁴⁸ He was also returning to a personal love that seemed almost hopeless and had become a torture. In this crisis he turned, as he turned later at a still more tragic moment, to Dante's *Divine Comedy* for consolation. This was apparently the suggestion of the sympathetic Mrs. Norton. On March 9, 1843, Longfellow wrote to her: "I have been translating some Cantos of Dante for you."⁴⁹ In telling her of the way in which he spent his time [*sic*]. He wrote her on March 21, 1843, of

the Divine Dante with which I begin the morning! I write a few lines every day before breakfast. It is the first thing I do—the morning prayer—the keynote of the day. I am delighted to have you take an interest in it. But do not expect too much—for I really have but a few moments to devote to it daily; yet daily a stone—small or great—is laid on the pile.⁵⁰

The cantos that Longfellow translated for Mrs. Norton at this time were the first ten cantos of the *Purgatorio*, but he was far from satisfied with the piecemeal progress that he was able to make with only a few lines each day and wrote across the top of his manuscript: "Only a rough draft, not to be printed on any account. Burn! Burn! Burn!"⁵¹ He tried to continue the work for three or more cantos of the *Purgatorio*, but dropped it in despair, not to take it up again until ten years later.

Mrs. Norton expressed her eagerness to see the "translator" as well as the "translation," and do what she could to console him.⁵² Possibly Longfellow took her into his confidence and told her how for seven long years he had been in love with Fanny Appleton, but she had kept him waiting and seemed not to return his affection. There were misunderstandings which he felt to have no opportunity to set straight. When he was at home, she was in Europe, and when he went to Europe, she was back in America, so that for some time no chance for understanding had been possible.

Not long after his return to America, however, the ever-kindly Mrs. Norton, on April 13, 1843, invited both him and the young lady to the same party and contrived to leave them alone together in the same window niche at Shady Hill. As Longfellow wrote in his journal: "I met my beloved Fanny after so long and tender a separation, and we began once more to draw near unto each other. It was at the Norton's—in the corner

window—the day and the evening shall be kept as a holiday and be blessed forevermore.”⁵³

There, at last, after seven years of waiting, a reconciliation took place which led soon afterward to the engagement on May 10—“day forever blessed; that ushered in the *Vita Nova* of happiness”—and the marriage of July 13.⁵⁴ No wonder that Shady Hill was more than ever endeared to him since it was there that he finally found, after years of anguish, that which he had been seeking—peace.

Through this critical period Dante had been his guide. It was in this mood that he thought of the proud figure of Farinata degli Uberti, as described in the tenth canto of the *Inferno*, rising in torture from his tomb and gazing out as though he held all hell in scorn, and of Dante himself, like a man who has been through Hell, so stern and so tender, wandering in exile in his lifelong search for peace, and Longfellow turned in his mind to that beautiful story he was so fond of telling his Dante students—the account of Dante given in the letter of the monk, Frate Ilario, as recorded in Arrivabene’s *Historical Comment*.⁵⁵

Tuscan, that wanderest through the realm of gloom,
With thoughtful pace, and sad, majestic eyes,
Stern thoughts and awful from thy soul arise
Like Farinata from his fiery tomb.
Thy sacred song is like the trump of doom;
Yet in thy heart what human sympathies,
What soft compassion glows, as in the skies
Sometimes the stars their clouded lamps relume.
Methinks I see thee stand, with pallid cheeks,
By Fra Hilario in his diocese,
As up the convent walls in golden streaks
The ascending sunshine marks the day’s decrease;
And, as he asks what there the stranger seeks,
Thy answer through the cloisters whispers “Peace!”⁵⁶

At this time Longfellow was engaged in the gigantic task of editing *The Poets and Poetry of Europe*.⁵⁷ In the section dealing with “Italian Language and Poetry,” he incorporated much that he had said in his lectures about the Italian predecessors of Dante; and in the section on Dante Alighieri, incorporated in condensed form his lectures on the life of Dante and a summary of the *Divine Comedy*. For the selections from the *Purgatorio*, he used his own translations that had appeared in the *Voices of the Night*, but

for the *Inferno* he used those of Byron and Parsons, and for the *Paradise* those of Wright.

At this time Longfellow's mind constantly turned back to thoughts of Italy. In the journal for February 15, 1848, he spoke of "deep longings for Italy, and villas by the margin of lakes, and walks under chestnut trees, and windows in cities looking out upon sunny squares."⁵⁸

The room in which Professor Longfellow had held his Dante classes was so strongly associated in his mind with the figures that had been conjured up there by the magic of Dante's poetry that it was long afterward for him a sort of haunted room.

In his journal for March 5, 1849, he wrote:

The Faculty meeting was holden this evening in No. 6. University;—my old Lecture Room. There were more persons there, than the other professors saw;—but I saw them—the ghosts of Dante, Molière, Cervantes, Goethe. It had a strange effect upon me to see the old room, where I lectured so many years, refitted, repainted and carpeted and lighted! But the spiritual presences were there almost as palpably as the grave professors around the lamps.⁵⁹

For the *American Monthly Magazine* of June, 1850, he translated the obscure and difficult essay on the *Divina Commedia* that had been written by the German transcendentalist Schelling⁶⁰—"very mystic and incomprehensible"⁶¹ . . . "like a dark cave, with some gleaming stalactites hanging from the roof"⁶² . . . "it is not *light* reading, but *dark* reading."⁶³

This masterpiece of mysticism by Schelling on the *Divina Commedia* and Longfellow's earlier lecture of 1838, called merely "Dante," were both published later as separate sections of *Driftwood* in Longfellow's *Prose Works*.⁶⁴

On January 9, 1851, Longfellow ended the last lecture in the course that he was the giving on Italian literature with an eloquent outburst of enthusiasm for Italy and the Italians: "I have a strong predilection for the Italians. I love the sky above their heads and the ground beneath their feet."⁶⁵

In another lecture he paid the following tribute to Italy:

To the imagination, Italy always has been, and always will be, the land of the sun, and the land of song. And neither tempest, rain, nor snow will ever chill the glow of enthusiasm that the name of Italy excites in every poetic mind. Say what ill of it you may; it still remains to the poet the land of his predilection, to the artist the land of his necessity, and to all the land of dreams and visions of delight.⁶⁶

With this intense love of Longfellow's for Italy, we can well understand how much he must have appreciated the beautiful tribute paid to him by George Stillman Hillard, the author of a book on Italy, who wrote to him from Rome in February 1848:

Your fine organization and poetical genius make you a sort of Italy among human beings. Many a time when I have seen the sun go down in a haze of "vaporous amethyst" have I been reminded of you and the poet's privilege to fling over this working world the purple light of imagination.⁶⁷

Up to this time, Longfellow's lectures had been devoted primarily to the *Purgatorio* and the *Inferno*, but now that Pietro Bachi had died, he began with 1851 to alternate Dante's *Inferno* with Goethe's *Faust*. In addition to these public lectures, Professor Longfellow had had to help out with the recitation courses in the languages when there was no assistant by whom these could be given. From 1838 to 1846 he conducted a section in the French language, at one time having as many as 117 students in the same classroom. From 1846 to 1854 he had a section in Italian, in which there were never more than 62 students, and had also occasional classes in Spanish and in German.⁶⁸

When after eighteen years of teaching at Harvard, he decided to retire, Longfellow was glad to be able to entrust these courses in modern languages, and above all the Dante course, to such able hands as those of his former student, now his successor, James Russell Lowell.

In February 1, 1853, Longfellow took up his translation of Dante at the point where he had dropped it ten years before and finished the *Purgatorio*. In his journal for February 1, 1853, he writes:

In weariness of spirit, and despair of writing anything original, I turned again today to dear old Dante; and resumed my translation of the *Purgatorio*, where I left it in 1843!—Find great delight in the work. It diffused its benediction through the day.⁶⁹

On the following day he writes: "In the morning a few lines of Dante to sweeten the day."⁷⁰

By the first of March, Longfellow had finished the translation of the *Purgatorio* which he had begun with the passages translated in *Voices of the Night* many years before. The central part of the *Divine Comedy* had been done in a rough draft, but it all needed revising. There then remained the

first and the last part of the *Divine Comedy*—the *Inferno* and the *Paradiso*—which he was not to undertake translating till nearly ten years later.

When Charles Eliot Norton came to devote himself more and more to his scholarly study of Dante, he felt the need of Longfellow's help, as Longfellow did of his. Unfortunately, Craigie House was almost as far from Harvard College in one direction as Shady Hill was in the other, and in the bad Cambridge winters it was not too easy for them to carry back and forth the large bulky Dante books necessary for their study. On January 15, 1859, Norton wrote to Longfellow with a happy suggestion of a future rearrangement of Cambridge: "In the next age I trust that Craigie House & Shady Hill may be side by side,—with no town between,—so that communication may be easier & more frequent."⁷¹

On May 14, 1859, in writing to Longfellow about borrowing some of his Dante books, he ended his letter with the following gracious tribute: "You were my first master in Dante, and I am for this, and for much beside / Gratefully & affectionately / Yours / Charles E. Norton."⁷²

It was on this same day, May 14, 1859, that Professor Longfellow, seeing what strides his former pupil was making in Dante scholarship, offered to turn over to Norton much of the Dante material he had collected, writing to him:

Long, long ago I planned a book to be called "An Introduction to the Study of Dante." It was to contain a translation of:

1. Boccaccio's Life
 2. The Vita Nova.
 3. The Letter of Fra Hilario.
 4. The Vision of Frate Alberico
 5. Schelling on the "Divina Commedia."
 6. Anecdotes & c. from the Novellieri.
 7. The best things said upon Dante by Carlyle Macaulay and others.
- & c. & c.

Now I make it all over to you, if you will undertake it. Will you?⁷³

Except for *The New Life of Dante: An Essay, with Translations*, published by Norton in that same year,⁷⁴ he handed, with equal generosity, all the rest of this material back to Longfellow to be used with other "Illustrations" at the end of Longfellow's translation of the *Divine Comedy*, when Longfellow published that eight years later.

In this same year, 1859, Longfellow was much perturbed by the oppression of Italy under the Austrians and much stirred by the movement

of the Risorgimento. On June 13, 1859, he wrote to Greene of his “fever of hope for the Italians,”⁷⁵ and in the *Atlantic Monthly* for August of that same year appeared the poem in which Longfellow impersonated this spirit of revolt in Italy in the Titan Enceladus:

And the nations far away
Are watching with eager eyes
They talk together and say,
“To-morrow, perhaps to-day,
Enceladus will arise!”
See, see: the red light shines!
Tis the glare of his awful eyes!
And the storm-wind shouts through the pines
Of Alps and of Apennines.
“Enceladus, arise!”⁷⁶

In the next year he read Charles Eliot Norton’s *Travel and Study in Italy* but found himself impatient to be there himself.⁷⁷ In his journal for March 2, 1860, he wrote: “All books on Italy make me restless. I long to be there; yet doubt and hesitate. Can I ever find again my lost Italy?”⁷⁸

Translating the *Divine Comedy*

The following year—the fateful year of 1861—brought to Longfellow a double tragedy: the national tragedy of the Civil War, the young men leaving for the battlefield, the cannon thundering in the South, the impending doom of a nation.

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearthstones of a continent.⁷⁹

And then, against the background of this national disaster, during the opening weeks of the War, the sudden, appalling, personal tragedy: the hot July day with the south wind fanning in at the window, Mrs. Longfellow with her children by the window sealing in a tiny package a curl from one of the girl’s hair, a falling bit of burning sealing wax setting her light white muslin dress ablaze, the breeze from the window fanning the flames, she, rushing away to spare the children, entering Longfellow’s study, he seizing a rug from the floor, wrapping it round her, burning his

hands and face, carrying her in his arms up the stairs to her bedroom, her death.

soul more white
Never through martyrdom of fire was led
To its repose.⁸⁰

Longfellow remained “to the eyes of others, outwardly, calm; but, inwardly, bleeding to death.”⁸¹

During the gloom of the following winter in the desolate house, he needed desperately the consolation which Dante alone could give. Perhaps taking up once more the task of translating the *Divine Comedy* would furnish a much needed continuous and tranquil occupation for his thoughts. On February 20, 1862, he wrote in his journal: “Translated the beautiful Canto XXV of the *Paradiso*.”⁸²

It was at the end of this canto that occurred the passage which seemed to speak so directly to his heart in this crisis, when Dante speaks of his distress in not being able to see the woman he has loved and lost, although he feels that she is close at hand.

At this very time when Longfellow was finding a daily task and a daily benediction in the translation of the *Divine Comedy*, the English poet, Robert Browning, whose wife had died only twelve days before Longfellow’s wife, was seeking a similar consolation in the translation of the *Alcestis* of Euripides—the great drama of a man whose wife had died and had been carried off to the other world.⁸³ In both cases the theme of the poem translated was curiously appropriate to the inner mood of the translator, and in both cases the author to be translated was one that had been deeply loved by the departed wife.

Longfellow continued in this translation of the concluding cantos of the *Paradiso*, which even more than the *Inferno* or the *Purgatorio*, offered him the elevated beauty that he needed at this time.

In his journal for March 10, 1862, he writes: “See Fields who wants some Cantos for the Atlantic.”⁸⁴ He accordingly gave Fields his translation of the three cantos of the *Paradiso*, ending with the beautiful twenty-fifth, to which he had first turned when seeking consolation. When these three cantos were later published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January 1864, they were published with a curious prose summary and commentary printed in the margin, somewhat as Coleridge had done in his *Rime of the Ancient*

Mariner.⁸⁵ This was apparently an experiment, with the idea perhaps of printing his entire translation of the *Divine Comedy* in the same way; but the margin sometimes offered more space than was needed and in others not enough, so that this plan was never carried any further.

On April 29, 1862, Longfellow writes in his journal: "Lowell comes to hear some cantos of my translation of the *Paradiso*, which he likes."⁸⁶

Here, already, was a foretaste of that helpful cooperation of Lowell and others in encouraging Longfellow and his translation which bore full fruit in the Dante Club of three and a half years later.

Not long after Lowell had expressed his interest in Longfellow's translation, it was Norton who expressed his willingness to extend a helping hand. In a letter of February 3, 1863, he wrote to Longfellow: "I shall come down soon to beg you to read me what you have lately done. I care for no translation now but yours. Perhaps when you feel well enough (very soon I trust) you will bring up a Canto to read & give pleasure to us all."⁸⁷ On March 1 of the same year he wrote again:

May I not come soon to have the pleasure of hearing another Canto of the *Paradise*? Or will you not bring another to read here? It is the greatest pleasure to me to hear your translation. It seems to me that the *Paradise* has never been translated before, and I am delighted that you, who first taught me to love Dante should continue thus to be my master and guide.⁸⁸

By this time the first draft of Longfellow's translation of *Paradiso* was finished, and on March 14, 1863, he set to work on the somewhat less congenial task of translating the *Inferno*. Just as in his Dante courses at Harvard he had begun by teaching the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*, which he liked better, and only come several years later to lecture on the *Inferno*, so it was now when he came to the translation of the different parts of the *Divine Comedy*.

Nonetheless he now held himself rigidly to translating a whole canto. On March 23, 1863, he wrote to Fields: "Dante goes on at the rate of a canto a day; and will soon be finished."⁸⁹ And to his old friend Greene, who had given him those three little volumes of the *Divina Commedia* more than a quarter of a century ago, he wrote: "You wound me up on Dante, and I had been running on ever since, striking the Cantos regularly every day."⁹⁰

By April 16, just thirty-four days after he had begun his translation of the *Inferno*, he had finished translating all thirty-four cantos.

Each day in entering upon his work on the *Divine Comedy*, he felt as if he were entering some great medieval cathedral. At the end of the day, as he lay down his burden, he felt like some workman leaving his burden at the Minster gate. On March 29, 1864, he wrote:

 Oft have I seen at some Cathedral door
 A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
 Lay down his burden and with reverent feet
 Enter and cross himself, and on the floor
 Kneel to rehearse his pater noster o'er;
 Far off the noises of the world retreat;
 The loud vociferations of the street
 Become an undistinguishable roar.
 So, as I enter here from day to day
 And leave my burden at this Minster gate,
 Kneeling in prayer and not ashamed to pray;
 The tumult of the time disconsolate
 To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
 While the eternal ages watch and wait.⁹¹

Inside this cathedral of the *Divine Comedy*, he found an infinite variety of rich sculptures. In one of his lectures on Dante, he had spoken of all the elaborate ornaments that were to be found within and, in the case of the *Inferno*, the grotesque gargoyles and sculptured devils, the pain and agony that made up one part of the whole great structure.

 How strange the sculptures that adorn these towers!
 This crowd of statues, in whose folded sleeves
 Birds build their nests; while canopied with leaves
 Parvis and portal bloom like trellised bowers,
 And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers!
 But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled eaves
 Watch the dead Christ between the living thieves.
 And, underneath, the traitor Judas lowers!
 Ah! From what agonies of heart and brain
 What exultations trampling on despair.
 What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,
 What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
 Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
 This mediæval miracle of song!⁹²

On April 30, 1863, Norton had first called Longfellow's attention to the fact that the six hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth was to be

celebrated in Italy in 1865 and urged Longfellow to prepare his translation so that a copy of it might be sent over to Italy for that occasion.⁹³ Accordingly, Longfellow began setting up the type for his translation of the *Inferno* by November 27, 1863,⁹⁴ and early in 1865, a privately printed copy was ready to be sent. On January 18, 1865, he wrote to Greene: "I am having one copy of Dante printed to be sent out to Italy"⁹⁵ and on February 10, he wrote to Sumner: "Tomorrow I shall send you by post a copy of the first volume of my Translation of the *Divine Comedy*, to be handed to the Italian Minister and by him forwarded to Italy."⁹⁶

Only ten copies of this privately printed set of Longfellow's Dante were issued, so that the book is now one of the rarest Longfellow items.⁹⁷ The copy which he presented to Lowell is now owned by Parkman Howe; that given to Norton is now in the Treasure Room of the Harvard College Library; that sent to Fields is now kept in the Library at Dartmouth College; the copy given to Greene was sold at the Wallace sale in 1920; still another copy belongs to Mr. Carroll Wilson of New York; and Mr. Longfellow himself kept three copies himself and in some cases an extra copy. That accounts for eight or nine of the privately printed copies in this country. It seems probable, then, that only one or at most two copies were sent to Italy. I cannot find the original source for the remark so often printed that five copies were sent to Italy. Each copy was bound in red morocco and bore the inscription: "In Commemorazione del Secentesimo Anniversario della Nascita di Dante Alighieri."⁹⁸

Just before the text, there was printed one of Longfellow's sonnets on translating the *Divine Comedy*. Apparently, he at first planned to print with the *Divine Comedy* only a single sonnet of his own. On April 20, 1864, he wrote to Greene: "I have three introductory sonnets for fly leaves, of the three parts; Boccaccio's, Michelangelo's, and a new one of my own."⁹⁹ As the three parts were privately printed, however, there was an appropriate sonnet of Longfellow's on the flyleaf of each volume; and when the three volumes were publicly printed in 1867, there were sonnets of Longfellow's at the beginning and end of each volume, making six in all.¹⁰⁰

Then, once the arduous task of translating the *Inferno* under pressure, so that it might be ready for the Dante anniversary, had been accomplished, there remained the pleasanter task of finishing the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*, which had already been translated in a rough draft but now needed revision.

[illegible]

Fig. 2: Chart prepared by Dana showing when Longfellow composed each of the six sonnets that were published with his translation of the *Divina Commedia*.

The revision of the *Purgatorio* was begun on November 28, 1863, and finished on February 1, 1864. It was privately printed at the beginning of 1866. The sonnet that was printed with this private edition was written on December 22, 1865, and represented Longfellow as now having fully entered the cathedral of the *Divine Comedy*, hearing the voices at the

confessionals, eagerly willing to purge away their sins in Purgatory, and listening to the divine voice of pardon.

I enter, and I see thee in the gloom
Of the long aisles, O poet saturnine!
And strive to make my steps keep pace with thine.
The air is filled with some unknown perfume;
The congregation of the dead make room
For thee to pass; the votive tapers shine;
Like rooks that hunt Ravenna's groves of pine
The hovering echoes fly from tomb to tomb;
From the confessionals I hear arise
Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies,
And lamentations from the crypts below;
And then a voice celestial that begins
With the pathetic words, "Although your sins
As scarlet be," and ends with "as the snow."¹⁰¹

Another sonnet, afterward placed at the end of the *Purgatorio*, was written much later, on May 5, 1867, and under guise of referring to Beatrice's appearance to Dante at the end of the *Purgatorio*, her rebuke, his remorse, and the final pardon and peace, reflects something of the experience that Longfellow himself had been through.

With snow-white veil, and garments as of flame,
She stands before thee, who so long ago
Filled thy young heart with passions and the woe
From which thy Song and all its splendors came.
As mingled with rebukes she speaks thy name,
The ice about thy heart melts like the snow
On mountain heights, in one great overflow,
And gushing from thy lips in sobs of shame.
Thou makest thy confession, and a gleam
As of the dawn on sombre forest cast,
Seems on thy lifted forehead to increase.
Lethe and Eunoe—the remembered dream
And the forgotten sorrow—being at last
That perfect pardon which is perfect peace.¹⁰²

The translation of the third and last part of the *Divine Comedy*—the *Paradiso*—was now revised and privately printed early in 1866. On the flyleaf was printed a sonnet that Longfellow had written on January 16, 1866. In

this he depicts himself no longer as standing at the Minster gate, or just entering the nave of the cathedral, but as lifting his eyes to see the stained glass windows of a clerestory and the high altar where mass is being celebrated.

I lift mine eyes, and all the windows blaze
With forms of Saints and holy men who died,
Here martyred and hereafter glorified;
And the great Rose upon its leaves displays
Christ's Triumph, and the angelic roundelays,
With splendor upon splendor multiplied;
And Beatrice again at Dante's side
No more rebukes, but smiles her words of praise.
And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs
Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and love
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;
And the melodious bells among the spires
O'er all the house-tops and through heaven above
Proclaim the elevation of the Host!¹⁰³

James Russell Lowell, in his article on Dante in Appleton's *Cyclopaedia* had already compared the *Divine Comedy* to a church:

The model of the poem is that of a Christian basilica: the ethnic forecourt of those who know not God; the purgatorial middle space of repentance, confession, and absolution; the altar of reconciliation, beyond and over which hangs the emblem of the Mediator, of the divine made human, that the human might learn how to become divine.¹⁰⁴

After Longfellow's series of sonnets in which the comparison of the *Divine Comedy* to a Gothic cathedral was carried out in more detail, Lowell in a later and much enlarged version of his essay, in 1876, elaborated his own comparison, calling it now a "Gothic cathedral," bringing in "its statues and its carvings," its grotesques and gargoyles, its side-chapels and altars, leading up to "the holy of holies" of the *Paradiso*.¹⁰⁵ Evidently, Longfellow and Lowell helped inspire each other in this magnificent comparison of the *Divine Comedy* and the Gothic cathedral—the two great creations of the Middle Ages.

For Longfellow's sixth and last sonnet, which was added at the end of the *Paradiso*, only when it came to be published with the other two volumes in public form, he turned to another aspect and aspiration of Dante's

life: unification of Italy. All through the period of Risorgimento, Longfellow had been intensely interested in what was going on in Italy. At the end of his lectures on Italian literature to the Harvard students he had read them the splendid sonnet of Filicaja with the translation he had made of it—the sonnet dealing with Italy's beauty and her strength, invaded and divided, "O vincitrice, o vinta."¹⁰⁶

From Dante to Alfieri, the dream of the Italian poets had been to see Italy united and independent. It was, then to the spirit of Dante the Liberator that he dedicated the final sonnet which he wrote on March 7, 1866:

O Star of morning and of liberty,
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines
Above the darkness of the Apennines,
Forerunner of the day that is to be!
The voices of the city and the sea,
The voices of the mountains and the pines
Repeat thy song, till its familiar lines
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!
Thy flame is blown abroad from all the heights,
And through all nations, and a sound is heard
As of a rushing wind, and men devout,
Strangers of Rome and the new proselytes
In their own language hear the wondrous word,
And many are amazed, and many doubt.¹⁰⁷

It is a striking fact that this series of six sonnets on the *Divina Commedia* should end with the word "doubt"—the doubt which, as Dante so truly says, lies at the foot of every truth.¹⁰⁸

The Dante Club, 1865–1867

Longfellow had begun his gigantic task of translating Dante's *Divine Comedy*, alone and in despair, after his wife's tragic death. He ended it surrounded by a group of helpful friends. In the early stages of revising his translation, he had written in his journal on November 13, 1864: "Stay at home and ponder upon Dante. I am frequently tempted to inscribe upon my work the inscription found upon an oar, cast on the shore of Iceland: 'Oft was I weary tugging at this oar!'"¹⁰⁹

Later, however, when he had turned from the *Inferno* to the *Paradiso* and when he had a group of friends to help and encourage it, he was able

to write to Greene on January 15, 1866, that the work “goes singing on its way.”¹¹⁰ The task, in hours of darkness willed, was now in hours of light fulfilled.

No one could have been more fortunate than Longfellow in the friends who helped him with his translation of Dante. Lowell from Elmwood in one direction, and Norton from Shady Hill in the other, met with Longfellow on common ground at the Craigie House, which was exactly on a straight line between the other two houses. It was these three Dante scholars meeting together at Craigie House on Wednesday evenings that formed the nucleus of the Dante Club.

It was on October 25, 1865, that the first meeting of the Dante Club took place. In Longfellow’s journal for that day we read: “Lowell, Norton and myself, had the first meeting of our Dante Club. We read the XXV *Purgatorio*, and then had a little supper. We are to meet every Wednesday at my home.”¹¹¹

Charles Eliot Norton was in many ways the guiding spirit of the group, but with characteristic modesty, knowing himself as younger than Longfellow and Lowell, and not so well known as they as poets, he always thought of himself as the third in importance in the triumvirate. In a charming tribute to those Dante meetings, written long afterward:

The memory of those evenings is renewed by the printed volumes when I take them from the shelves. The verses recall the questions they suggested, the debates to which they led. The scene revives, and I hear the voices of the poets:

Ch’esser mi fecer della loro schiera,
Si ch’io fui terzo tra cotanto senno.¹¹²

As Dante felt himself honored to be welcomed as a *sixth* among the number of the Classic poets—Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan—so Norton, modifying Dante’s number, was pleased to find himself welcomed as a *third* in a circle including the American poets—Longfellow and Lowell.

At first there were merely these three. Longfellow sat at the round, green table in the middle of the room, which was lit up by a cone of light from the drop lamp, while Lowell and Norton sat at either side of him. The convex mirror over the fireplace brought the group together in a sort of magic microcosm, in which one could see also the green covered

furniture, the turkey-red window curtains and the orange tree in the corner near the window. Beyond the cone of light, could be dimly seen in the shadows, the portraits of Longfellow's friends: Sumner, Emerson, Hawthorne, Felton. Above the bookcases were busts or statuettes of the great writers of different countries: Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe.

Each of the three Dante scholars gathered there—Longfellow, Lowell, Norton—had before him a copy of the Italian text of the *Divine Comedy*. Longfellow then read to them the proofsheets of his translations, which he had specially printed with wide margins to leave plenty of room to put in their suggestions and criticism. These he always accepted graciously, although he did not always follow them.

From time to time others joined the group. Fields, the publisher, came out from Boston. Greene, the friend of Longfellow's youth, came up for the occasion once a month or so from East Greenwich, in Rhode Island. Longfellow's brother-in-law, Tom Appleton, a "fellow of infinite jest,"¹¹³ joined the group whenever he happened not to be in Europe, for which, it was said, he always had a ticket ready in his pocket. Two or three times the sculptor Akers came. Once a young poet, who died shortly afterward, Forsythe Wilson, came, and once or twice the baron Mackay, a Hollander of Scotch descent, attended the meeting, and once Mr. J. H. A. Bone of Cleveland, Ohio, who wrote up a very detailed account of the discussion that took place that day on Canto 13 of the *Inferno*.¹¹⁴ Sometimes, at what he was pleased to call the "Cabinet Council" of Dante scholars, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," came out from Boston and lent grace and wit to the Dante suppers, where he sometimes proved himself to be an "Autocrat of the Supper Table" as well.¹¹⁵ Sometimes Richard Henry Dana Jr., the author of *Two Years Before the Mast*, came over from his house nearby.¹¹⁶

Finally, when William Dean Howells returned from four years in Italy, where he had studied Dante with an Italian priest, came to live in Cambridge, he attended with some regularity and has left us a delightful account of these meetings of the Dante Club. It is he who speaks of "the gracious amity of Mr. Norton with his unequaled intuitions."¹¹⁷ It is Howells again when he describes at these gatherings how Holmes sparkled, and Lowell glowed, and Agassiz beamed.

One more member of the Dante Club should not be forgotten. This was Longfellow's dog, Trap. It is of his adventures that Longfellow writes

to his youngest son, Ernest, saying on November 17, 1865: "Trap sends his regards. His last misdemeanor was stealing a partridge from the supper table of the Dante Club. That was his view of the *Divine Comedy*."¹¹⁸

January 18, 1865, Longfellow writes to Greene how he, upon his way to the printers with his translation of the *Divine Comedy* is accompanied by Trap, who walks along as haughtily as though it was he who had done the translating.¹¹⁹ On March 10, 1866, Longfellow writes again to his son Ernest about the Dante meetings, adding: "Trap also attends the meetings and snores under the big chair. He leads a life of self-indulgence and even sleeps in a champagne basket."¹²⁰

Apparently Trap was not the only one who snored at these Dante meetings. Howells gives an account of a "dear old scholar," whom I suspect was Longfellow's old friend Greene, "who sat in a cavernous armchair at the corner of the fire and who drowsed audibly in the soft tone and the gentle heat."¹²¹ It appears that Longfellow's voice, as he read on and on, had in it a "mellow resonant murmur," which had a strangely soporific effect.¹²² When Greene and the dog were both snoring at the same time, but not always in the same rhythm, it was a little disconcerting to the other Dante scholars. Mr. Longfellow would then look up with an arch recognition of what had happened, smiling and then going bravely on with the reading to the end of the canto. Finally, at the end of the reading, when his old friend Greene suddenly woke up, Mr. Longfellow would speak to him as though no one had noticed that he had been asleep and lead him on his arm out to supper.

At supper the dear old scholar took whatever the others said with all seriousness. One evening when Lowell was putting some cayenne pepper on his oysters, he remarked: "It's astonishing how fond these fellows are of pepper," whereupon the old friend of the cavernous armchair, still half asleep, questioned, "Ah?" At which Lowell was tempted to go further and add: "Yes I've got dropped a red pepper pod into a barrel of them and then taken them out in a solid mass clinging to it like a swarm of bees to their queen." To this the old friend, taking it all very solemnly, rejoined: "Is it possible?" At this point Longfellow would intervene to save his friend from worse blunders and turn the conversation to other topics.¹²³

Tom Appleton, half humorously, used to pretend to take spiritualism very seriously. Once he tried to tell the scientist, Agassiz, about a spiritualistic séance where invisible spirits threw large stones across the room and

lifted tables and pianos and set them spinning under the chandelier. "And now" he demanded, "what do you say to that, Mr. Agassiz?" "Well, Mr. Appleton," replied Agassiz, "I say that it did not happen," whereupon Appleton burst into a hearty laugh.¹²⁴

There was a tendency to make fun of Sam Ward, the "King of the Lobby," as being enormously rich, certainly richer than any of them there, and Tom Appleton amused them by telling them how he would have found the gambling place at Frascati's horribly dull, if it had not been for Sam Ward coming up to him and asking to borrow a guinea from him.

On one occasion Appleton suggested that Longfellow should show them his wine cellar, whereupon Longfellow took up one of the candles from the table and led the way down the cellar stairs where he had found the letters that old Mr. Craigie had hidden there and shown them the bottles with precious vintages, cobwebbed and dusty arranged on their shelves like books in a library. Howells added slyly: "It is the inside of bottles and books that makes their appeal."¹²⁵

On one occasion Lowell was prevented from attending the Dante Club meeting by a sore throat, whereupon Longfellow recommended to him a claret gargle. Lowell then wrote to Longfellow on January [12], 1866, urging him to take some of his own medicine.¹²⁶

During the first year of the Dante Club, these genial and congenial Wednesday evening meetings, which had begun with the discussion of Dante's *Purgatorio* on October 25, 1865, continued for some thirty-three weeks until they came to the last canto of the *Paradiso* on June 13, 1866.

Some of the members were all too reluctant to have the readings come to an end with the end of Dante's *Paradiso*. At the next to last meeting of the year that on June 6, 1866, William Dean Howells told Norton, who had already left for his Summer home at Ashfield, how James Russell Lowell, when it was announced that the *Paradiso* and the meetings of the Dante Club would end the following Wednesday, expressed his regret that the *Divina Commedia* was not longer and, turning to Longfellow, asked jokingly, "whether there was not an Indian epic in 100,000 lines which he was going to translate next."¹²⁷

On June 12, 1866, Longfellow wrote to the publisher, James T. Fields, saying that he was keeping his place for him for the last meeting of the Dante Club on the following evening. He added, however, that they might continue the meetings during the following winter, saying: "If you

are not in too much of a hurry to publish, there is still a long vista of pleasant evenings stretching out before us. We can pull them out like a spy-glass."¹²⁸

Accordingly, the Dante Club was by unanimous consent prolonged into a second season. They had finished the readings and discussions of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*. Those were Longfellow's favorite canticles. As in the case of his lectures and translation, so now in the readings and discussions of the Dante Club, he left the less congenial *Inferno* to the end. Having now only one canticle left to cover, the second and last season of the Dante Club did not last as long as the first. It did not begin until Wednesday evening, December 19, 1866, when they read the first two Cantos of the *Inferno*, and ran only through Wednesday evening, May 1, 1867, Dante's month, when they finished the *Inferno* and, with Dante, emerged once more to behold the stars.¹²⁹

By a coincidence, one of these Wednesdays sacred to the Dante Club, fell upon Longfellow's sixtieth birthday on February 27, 1867. At the breakfast table, among other presents, was a poem by James Russell Lowell, entitled: "To H. W. L. on his LXth birthday, / 27th February, 1867." This had been printed by Lowell as a surprise in the morning newspaper.¹³⁰ It began with the stanza:

I need not praise the sweetness of his song,
Where limpid verse to limpid verse succeeds
Smooth as our Charles, when, fearing lest he wrong
The new-moon's mirrored skiff, he slides along,
Full without noise, and whispers in his reeds.

and ended with the stanza:

Long days be his and each as lusty-sweet
As gracious natures find his song to be;
May Age steal on with softly-cadenced feet
Falling in music, as for him were meet
Whose choicest verse is not so rare as he!

Lowell also sent a manuscript copy of the poem, in which he amended several of the lines and added a stanza explaining why—unable in February to find, except in a hot-house, the flowers he had wished to send—he had chosen this poetic bouquet instead:

A gift of symbol-flowers I meant to bring.
White for the candor, for thy kindness red;
But Nature here denies them to the Spring,
And in forced blooms an odorous warmth will cling
Not artless: take this bunch of verse instead.

J. R. L.¹³¹

In Longfellow's journal for this day, Wednesday, February 27, 1867—his sixtieth birthday—after mentioning the gifts that had come from Lowell in the morning, he adds: In the afternoon Greene came on from Rhode Island; and in the evening we had our usual Dante Club—Howell, Fields, Greene, Holmes—Norton was absent being in New York.

At supper Holmes read these lines:
In gentle bosoms, tried and true
How oft the thought will be,
“Dear Friend, shall I remember you,
Or you remember me?”
But thou, sweet singer of the West
Whose song in every zone
Has soothed some aching grief to rest
And made some heart thine own;
Wherne'er thy tranquil sun descends,—
Far, far that evening be!—
What mortal tongue may count the friends,
That shall remember thee?¹³²

During the last eight weeks of the Dante Club, a pleasant innovation was added. In addition to the Wednesday evening meetings at Craigie House at which Mr. Longfellow read his translation of the *Divina Commedia*, there were a few Saturday evening meetings at Shady Hill at which Mr. Norton read his translation of *La Vita Nuova*. As early as October 19, 1866, Norton had written to Lowell: “I have been revising my ‘Vita Nuova’ and hope to have it in type soon, and then to have some pleasant readings with Longfellow and you.”¹³³

The meetings at Shady Hill, however, apparently did not begin until Saturday evening, March 16, 1867, when Longfellow writes in his journal: “*Vita Nuova* at Norton's. A snow storm beginning. We drive home in it.”¹³⁴

A week later, while these Wednesday evenings and Saturday evenings of the Dante Club were pleasantly alternating, Norton wrote to Aubrey de Vere, on March 25, 1867:

Longfellow is busy with the final revision of his translation of the "Divina Commedia," Of which the whole is to be published very soon. Every Wednesday evening Lowell and I meet at his house to consider with him the last touches of his work; and on Saturday evenings he and Lowell come to me to read over with me my translation of the "Vita Nuova," which is to appear as a companion volume to Longfellow's work. These evening studies are delightful; and after we have finished our work we have a little supper to which generally one or two friends come in, and at which we always have a pleasant time.¹³⁵

The Commentary¹³⁶

Longfellow's task of translation was over, but there remained the almost equally gigantic task of adding the notes and the commentary and the so-called "illustrations," consisting of the forerunners of Dante's conception of a visit to the other World, from Homer and Virgil throughout the innumerable medieval visions, and also the various criticisms and essays about Dante which had appeared during the centuries since his death. Professor Longfellow accumulated a tremendous mass of material, of which he was able to use only a part in his complete edition when it was published. Even as it stands, however, this commentary is far larger in bulk than the translation; and I think Professor Grandgent was right in saying that it was far more important, certainly far more important than is usually recognized. Many of the analogies with poets of other countries, which are now taken as commonplace, were first pointed out by Longfellow in his edition. Norton, in a letter to Longfellow on October 11, 1866, wrote:

I have read your Notes with the greatest pleasure. They form a body of truly delightful & helpful illustration of Dante, and are worthy to go with your translation. There is no other comment on Dante to be compared with yours for containing what, and only what, an intelligent reader desires to have told him, in order that he may appreciate better than he otherwise could do the essential qualities of the poem. It is a comment by a scholar who is in sympathy with the poet, not a critic of his style or thought.¹³⁷

Criticism of Longfellow's Translation

When, in April 1867, Longfellow's translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* was finally published in its complete form, with notes and commentary and index, the work provoked, as all of Longfellow's works did, a great

deal of hostile criticism. Some of these critics, who evidently did not know Dante at first hand, seemed a little unfair, and some of the members of the Dante Club in their reviews of Longfellow's translation tried to give a fairer estimate of the translation in its fidelity to the original Italian text. Many of them still had many reservations to make about Longfellow's methods of translating, so that their support of Longfellow was by no means that of a "mutual admiration society."¹³⁸

Norton was away at his summer place at Ashfield when one of the most savage attacks of the British critics appeared on Longfellow's translation. From there he wrote to Lowell on May 31, 1867: "The force of such an attack upon it can best be broken by comparing it with the other translations. I brought none of them with me . . . If you will go to Shady Hill you will find all the translations of a shelf in a bookcase in my inner study, close to the portrait of Dante."¹³⁹

Accordingly Lowell hastened to gather together and read over all the English translations of Dante he could lay hands on. Of this he wrote the following amusing account to Norton:

I was almost crazy. You see I went up to Shady Hill—picking up Longfellow on the way—and it was *very* hot, and I brought away an armful of translations, just cutting out Howells, who was on the same errand. I came home with my prize, wet through with the only sure result of all earthly toils, and began to compare. Good Heavens!

I had Cayley and Ford, and Dayman and Ramsay
And lots of others that made me 'd-' say, and Brooksbank and Wright, and last
Rossetti. Well, I addled my brains over 'em—my tables were heaped, my floor
stumbly with
my a-versions, as I called them when I looked at them,
my in-versions when I read them.¹⁴⁰

For inversions were rampant in the other translations that Lowell poured over in this study at Elmwood. Almost all the other translators of the *Divine Comedy* had inverted the order of words as found in Dante. Longfellow had been scrupulously careful to keep the order of the words as in the Italian, to keep, if possible, the same vowels and even the same consonants. If he read:

Per me si va nella città dolente. (*Inf.* 3.1)

He wrote:

Through me you go into the city dolent.

“City dolent” may not be idiomatic English, but it keeps the order of words and something of the same sound as the Italian “città dolente.”

In this joint review of Longfellow’s *Dante*, which Lowell and Norton prepared together for the *North American Review*, though they did not hesitate to point out the shortcomings of Longfellow’s translation, they also pointed out its careful fidelity to the original text.¹⁴¹ To a friend who had sent Lowell one of the more ignorant attacks on Longfellow’s translation, Lowell replied:

The review does not change my opinion of Mr. Longfellow’s translation—not as the best possible, by any means, but as the best probable . . . Nobody who is intimate with the original will find any translation of the *Divina Commedia* more refreshing than cobs. Has not Dante himself told us that no poetry can be translated? But, after all is said, I think Mr. Longfellow’s the best thus far as being the most accurate . . . Mr. Longfellow is not a scholar in the German sense of the word, that is to say, he is no pedant, but he certainly *is* a scholar in another and perhaps a higher sense, I mean in range of acquirement and the flavor that comes of it.¹⁴²

On account of his very devotion to Dante, Longfellow objected to those translators who tried to embellish the original by adding words of their own, either to try to make their translation more “poetical” or for the sake of rhyme or meter.

In a letter of [August 2, 1867] to [John Neal] he wrote: “I maintain that a translator, like the witness on the stand, should hold up his right hand and swear to ‘tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.’”¹⁴³

Longfellow came to realize that in the case of Dante, it was almost impossible for the English translator to give “the whole truth” of Dante’s meaning in any mere translation; but at least the translator should be careful not to add anything of his own to Dante’s words. As Longfellow wrote Bernard Roelker on February 12, 1868, about his translation of Dante: “If not ‘the whole truth,’ it is at least ‘the truth, and nothing but the truth.’”¹⁴⁴

At one time Longfellow had thought of translating the *Divine Comedy* in the same intricate rhyme scheme as the Italian original, but he felt that this elaborate weaving of rhythms, although so smooth in the original, would be likely to force him to add words here and there for the sake of the rhyme—in other words to say something “more than the truth.”

Since no translation could be satisfactory from every point of view, he felt that he must reluctantly give up the beauty of the rhyme for the sake of truth to Dante's text.¹⁴⁵ In his journal for May 7, 1864, he wrote: "In translating Dante something must be relinquished. Shall it be the beautiful rhyme that blossoms all along the lines, like a honeysuckle in a hedge? I fear it must, in order to retain something more precious than rhyme, namely fidelity—truth—the life of the hedge itself."¹⁴⁶

Among scraps of unfinished and unpublished manuscripts of verses by Longfellow, I have recently come upon a fragment of six lines, apparently the sestet of a sonnet for which he never wrote the opening octave. This hitherto unpublished manuscript is dated July 30, 1866, and is entitled, "Translation of Dante":

Pardon me, then, if building after thee
In the cold granite of our English speech,
And in a different age and different clime,
Content to keep the form and symmetry,
I leave reluctant, as beyond my reach,
The medieval ornaments of rhyme.¹⁴⁷

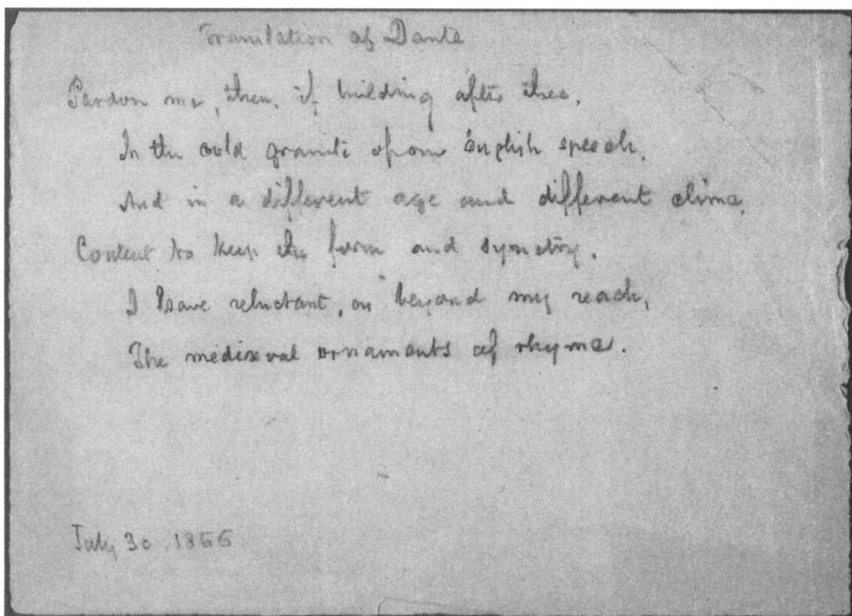


Fig. 3: A sestet, dated July 30, 1866, in which Longfellow meditates on his approach to translating Dante.

Longfellow's translation, then, took a middle ground: it was neither so poetic as Parson's freer translation nor so literal as Norton's later prose translation. It tried to combine some of the excellences of both methods.

Many readers, not knowing Dante's poem well in the original, find Longfellow's translation, reading it by itself, unsatisfactory. Yet if it is read in juxtaposition with the Italian text, or better still by someone already thoroughly familiar with Dante's actual words, it is curious to see how Longfellow echoes Dante's phrases, not merely line for line, but often word for word. This is what Longfellow had in mind when he printed on the title page of all three volumes of his translation the following lines from Edmund Spenser: "I follow here the footing of thy feete / That with thy meaning so I may the rather meete."¹⁴⁸ In following of the footsteps of Dante, Longfellow was trying to follow him step by step, foot by foot. It was for that reason that those who knew their Dante best seemed to like Longfellow's translation best. Howells, who had studied Dante in Italian with an Italian priest when he was living in Italy, wrote: "Opening the book, we stand face to face with the poet, and when his voice ceases we may well marvel if he has not sung to us in his own Tuscan."¹⁴⁹

Again, Longfellow's predecessor in teaching Dante at Harvard as professor of Romance languages, George Ticknor, who knew Dante well in the original, wrote: "I shall always read your translation with the original ringing in my ears."¹⁵⁰

On Wednesday, November 6, 1867, toward the end of the year in which Longfellow's translation of the *Divine Comedy* had finally been made public in its completed form, the publishers invited the various members of the Dante Club and a few other honored guests to a dinner in celebration of the completion of this long labor of love. In addition to those who had been in the habit of attending the Dante readings—Lowell, Norton, Greene, Agassiz, Longfellow's cousin, Thomas Gold Appleton, and [Holmes—] they had also invited Longfellow's brother and biographer, Samuel Longfellow, and Longfellow's two sons, Charles and Ernest, by that time twenty-one and twenty-three years of age, and a few other guests of honor.¹⁵¹ They had appropriately chosen a Wednesday evening—the evening sacred to the memory of the Dante meetings. In his journal for that day Longfellow wrote: "Ticknor and Fields gave a beautiful banquet at the Union Club in honor of the *Divina Commedia*

translation. Among other guests, R. H. Dana, Senior, of the Old Guard of Literature; Dr. Hayes, the Arctic Explorer; Lord Amberley.”¹⁵²

It may have been noticed that neither at the Dante Club meetings nor at this banquet were any ladies actually present; but the best known woman writer of that day, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Annie Fields, the wife of the publisher; and lady Amberley, the wife of a British ambassador, joined together in sending to the banquet a beautiful wreath with a note signed by their three names, which Mr. Longfellow carefully kept, jotting down in pencil an explanation of the occasion for the gift. In his journal he wrote: “During dinner a lovely wreath of choice flowers is brought to me from Mrs. Field, Mrs. Stowe and Lady Amberley.”¹⁵³

Finally, toward the beginning of the next year, on February 12, 1868—and again a Wednesday evening was appropriately selected—there was one more farewell meeting of the Dante Club before Longfellow sailed abroad for a two year's trip in Europe. In his journal for the day of that last meeting, Longfellow wrote simply: “Evening, a Dante Club supper; Lowell, Norton, Fields, Holmes, Howells, Dana, Akers and S.L. (i.e., Samuel Longfellow).”¹⁵⁴

Italy Revisited

On May 27, 1868, Longfellow sailed abroad, taking with him his three daughters, his son and his son's wife, his brother, Samuel Longfellow, his sisters Anne Longfellow Pierce and Mary Longfellow Greenleaf, and brother-in-law Thomas Gold Appleton, not to mention other cousins who joined the party in England. He visited the poet laureate, Lord Tennyson at Farrington-Freshwater on the Isle of Wight. Lady Tennyson writes heroically of entertaining Longfellow and seven ladies. At Tennyson's they saw “a mask of Dante, with red velvet back and sort of cowl in a conspicuous place and at the foot of it a large colored reproduction [of] Giotto's painting of Dante in the Bargello with the impression of the nail that had been driven into it, and a bust of Dante on the table.”¹⁵⁵

Everywhere they went, they came upon places or persons or pictures associated with Dante: in Florence, in Verona, in Ravenna, in Rome, in Monte Cassino. On several occasions Longfellow dined with the old blind Dante scholar, the Duke of Sermoneta. The city of Florence presented

Longfellow with a medal in honor of his translation of Dante. The king of Italy offered Longfellow a religious and military order—the Order of SS. Maurizio e Lazzaro—which Longfellow, because he was neither a royalist nor a Catholic nor a militarist, felt that he ought not to accept. In England he received honorary degrees from both Oxford and Cambridge and was received at Windsor by Queen Victoria.¹⁵⁶

Old Age¹⁵⁷

In the autumn of 1869, after his triumphal tour through Europe, Longfellow made plans for publishing a revised version of his translation of Dante, and in his journal for October 17, 1869, wrote, "Finished the revision of the *Divina Commedia* for new edition."¹⁵⁸

He then set about the gigantic task of writing a long poetic drama on the life of that other great Florentine: Michelangelo. In a passage written on December 23, 1873, but never published during Longfellow's lifetime, he imagines Michelangelo, in old age and in despair, opening the *Divina Commedia*, and saying:

I turn for consolation to the leaves
Of the great master of our Tuscan tongue,
Whose words, like colored garnet-shirls in lava,
Betray the best in which they were engendered.
A mendicant, he ate the bitter bread
Of others, but repaid their meagre gifts
With immortality. . . .

In his song
I hear reverberate the gates of Florence,
Closing upon him, never more to open;
But mingled with the sound are melodies
Celestial from the gates of paradise.
He came and he is gone. The people knew not
What manner of man was passing by their doors,
Until he passed no more; but in his vision
He saw the torments and beatitudes
Of souls condemned or pardoned, and hath left
Behind him this sublime Apocalypse.¹⁵⁹

At about this same time, Longfellow, upon whom old age was coming as it came upon Michelangelo, was reading Dante in Italian with one of

his children. In his journal for January 16 1874, he writes, "Finished reading the *Divina Commedia* with E[dith]." ¹⁶⁰

In the following year, on July 7, 1875, when he went to Bowdoin College to read his poem "Morituri Salutamus" for the fiftieth anniversary of his class there, in paying tribute in his verses to the only one of their former professors still alive, he referred to Dante's tribute to his old teacher:

The great Italian poet, when he made
His dreadful journey to the realms of shade,
Met there the old instructor of his youth,
And cried in tones of pity and of ruth:
"Oh, never from the memory of my heart
Your dear, paternal image shall depart,
Who while on earth, ere yet by death surprised,
Taught me how mortals are immortalized. . . ." ¹⁶¹

During the remaining seven years of Longfellow's life, he found his thoughts constantly turning to Italy and to Dante. When the wintry storms beat about Craigie House in Cambridge, he longed once more for the sunshine of Italy.

Walled about with drifts of snow,
Hearing the fierce north-wind blow,
Seeing all the landscape white,
And the river cased in ice,
Comes this memory of delight,
Comes this vision unto me
Of a long-lost Paradise
In the land beyond the sea. ¹⁶²

There in his bookcases, bound in white vellum, were his copies of Dante and the other Italian poets. Reading them, the bright days when he was young came back to him and could still take in imagination "travels by the fireside." ¹⁶³ As he had written in *Hyperion* of a poet's life: "He has his Rome, his Florence, his whole glowing Italy, within the four walls of his library." ¹⁶⁴

Longfellow often longed for those happy days of the Dante Club. Professor Norton says of this period of Longfellow's life: "He frequently used to propose the renewal of our Dantean meetings, urging me to translate the *Convito*, that it might form the subject of our discourse. I engaged to

do the prose, if he would pledge himself to doing the difficult *Canzoni*. He smiled, and postponed the task.”¹⁶⁵

Meanwhile the students of a voluntary class in Dante which Professor Norton was giving at his house at Shady Hill were laying plans from which emerged a new Dante Society, which was to make more permanent the association of American Dante scholars that had had its germ in the informal Wednesday evening gatherings in Craigie House back in the 1860s. Of the origins of the new Dante Society, the following account was given later in a letter from Mr. Norton written to Mr. William Roscoe Thayer on July 29, 1904:

It was, I think, in 1880 that some members of the class which I was conducting in the *Divine Comedy*, hearing me speak of the possible service which a club for the promotion of Dante studies might render, came to me to say that they wished such a club might be founded, and would be glad to do what might be in their power to give it a good start. . . . I told them that I thought that the success of the effort would depend on whether Mr. Longfellow would consent to take the presidency of the proposed Society, and that I would consult with him about it. Longfellow was cordial in his approval of the scheme. He saw in it, especially, the means by which the Dante library of Harvard might be strengthened and steadily increased.¹⁶⁶

Accordingly a printed prospectus was sent out, dated December 6, 1880, and signed by John Woodbury, one of Norton's Dante students who acted as secretary. This announced: "It is proposed to form a Society for the encouragement and promotion of the study of Dante's life and works."¹⁶⁷ It went on to state: "Mr. Henry W. Longfellow has consented to accept the Presidency of the Society."¹⁶⁸

Two months later, on February 11, 1881, we find Norton writing to James Russell Lowell, who was then in London, where he had been appointed as American Minister to England:

To-night I go to Longfellow's to attend the first meeting of the Dante Club, of which he has consented to be president. Your acceding to become a member of the club gave great satisfaction to the young men who have been active in getting it up. They will ask you, I believe, to be the vice-president. I do not know that much good will come of the Society, beyond the cherishing of the love and honor of the poet in the lives of a few of the better class of students of a generation younger than our own. This is enough.¹⁶⁹

For the modest Norton that was enough, but as a matter of fact the Society was to do much more than that: to help build up one of the best

Dante libraries in the world, to offer an annual Dante Prize for the best essay on a subject drawn from the life or works of Dante, to publish in its annual reports papers by Dante scholars, to publish bibliographies of new Dante books, and to compile three Dante concordances that are used by Dante scholars throughout the world.¹⁷⁰

That first meeting of the Dante Society was held here in Longfellow's study on Friday evening, February 11, 1881. The meeting was called to order by the president, Mr. Longfellow, seated in his chair at the round table in the middle of the room. Behind him was the bust of George Washington Greene, who some fifty-three years earlier had given him in Italy those three little volumes of the *Divina Commedia*. High above, on a bracket over the mirror, was the statuette of Dante, presiding over the meeting. As Longfellow had written to Greene on January 13, 1864, when he first put the statue there: "Dante has ascended to his station over your head."¹⁷¹

Below it, on the table, just in front of the bust of Greene, was a casket containing precious Dante relics. On top of the casket keeping guard, was a bronze dog, which Longfellow, remembering the name of Dante's guardian, used to call "Can Grande."¹⁷² Inside the casket were carefully kept a number of curious Dante memorabilia.¹⁷³ When, at the time of the six hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth, Dante's coffin had been moved to a new tomb in Ravenna, in rounding a corner, some small fragments of the coffin had broken off. One of the workmen picked up these broken fragments. Here in this casket was kept a piece of parchment, dated: Ravenna, May 28, 1865, on which this workman bore testimony in the presence of two witnesses that on the previous day he had picked up these fragments of Dante's coffin. Here in the casket was also a photograph of the workman and of the place where the coffin of Dante had been found. Here also was kept a printed pamphlet giving an account of this discovery, dated: Ravenna, 1865, and a slip of paper saying that these fragments of Dante's coffin had been "presented to T. B. Lawrence at Ravenna. 1868."¹⁷⁴ Then in this casket was kept the little glass covered case, mounted with purple paper, containing the precious pieces of wood. On the back Mr. Longfellow had written: "Fragments of the Coffin of Dante. From Mr. T. B. Lawrence 1872."

In the same casket were also kept a medal with a bas-relief of Dante Alighieri on one side and on the other side the inscription: "Al Divino Poeta L'Italia nel Maggio MDCCCLXV. Municipio Fiorentino."¹⁷⁵ This

was kept in a leather case with a Florentine fleur-de-lis and inside in Longfellow's handwriting: "Presented to Henry W. Longfellow by the City of Florence 1869." Then there was another smaller Dante medal with the following inscription on the reverse: "Nel Sesto Centenario del suo Gran Figlio Firenze Priva dell'Ossa di lui si Riconforta nella Diletta Effigie."¹⁷⁶ There, also, were kept some photographs of at least thirteen different paintings¹⁷⁷ and statues of Dante¹⁷⁸ and the smallest copy of the *Divina Commedia*, which could be read only by a microscope and looked as if it could be swallowed in a single mouthful.¹⁷⁹

When the meeting was called to order, "the President, Mr. Longfellow, stated the purpose of the meeting to be for organization. Mr. Norton described the origin of the Society and called upon the Secretary for the names of those, not present, who had accepted the invitation to become members of the Society."¹⁸⁰ It appeared that only twelve members were present at this first meeting, but that eleven others, including James Russell Lowell, who were forced to be absent, had gladly joined the Society. "Mr. Norton then offered a series of by-laws which were discussed and referred to a committee . . . The same committee were instructed to prepare a list of officers to present at the next meeting."¹⁸¹

The next month, on March 17, 1881, a meeting was held at Mr. Norton's house at Shady Hill, at which the bylaws as presented by the committee were accepted and the Society then proceeded to elect Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as president and James Russell Lowell as vice-president.¹⁸² Four days later on March 21, the Council of the Society met at the room of the Secretary, John Woodbury, at No. 2 Grays Hall, to arrange for the printing of the bylaws, to send notices of the organization to the *University Bulletin* and the *New York Nation*, to offer a donation for "the purchase of books of Dantesque interest to be deposited in the Harvard College Library."¹⁸³

The next regular meeting, like all the subsequent regular meetings was held on the third Tuesday in the month of May—"Dante's Month."¹⁸⁴ This meeting of May 21, 1881, took place at the house of the Harvard librarian, Justin Winsor. Again the meeting was called to order by the president, Mr. Longfellow. This time there were some fourteen members present, including Luigi Monti, who had been the "Young Sicilian" in Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, and a young Harvard Law School student, Mr. Joseph Gilbert Thorp, who was the brother-in-law of Ole Bull, the Norwegian violinist, and who some [four] years later married

Longfellow's youngest daughter.¹⁸⁵ "Before the meeting, Mr. Longfellow called the attention of this Society" to some Dante books of interest. At the meeting, "the secretary read a letter from Mr. Lowell accepting the vice-presidency of the Society and a copy of a vote of thanks to the Society passed by the President and Fellows of Harvard College for the gift of the books to be deposited in the Library."¹⁸⁶

Mr. Longfellow had contributed some money for copying the Latin comment on the *Divine Comedy* made by Benvenuto da Imola in the fourteenth century and plans were made to have this published by the Dante Society, and two circulars to that effect were sent out by the Society in June, 1881. A later circular, however, was sent out in December of that year announcing that the plan was given up so as not to conflict with the publication of the same commentary, which had been arranged by Lord Vernon in England.¹⁸⁷

On February 1, 1882, the month before Longfellow's death, plaster casts of Dante's death mask were sent out to all the members of the Dante Society with a circular containing an account of the mask and pointing out its striking resemblance to the portrait of Dante in Giotto's fresco in the Bargello in Florence.¹⁸⁸ Here is the circular and here is the mask sent to Mr. Longfellow: "Eccovi l'uomo che è stato nel Inferno!"¹⁸⁹ Longfellow, who had been re-reading the *Divine Comedy* again, had marked a number of passages in his translation for revision and accumulated many additional notes and comments. (Some of these, but not all were published some years after his death by Mr. Norton in the *Annual Report of the Dante Society* for 1885.)¹⁹⁰ During the last winter of his life Mr. Longfellow had expressed the hope that the old Dante meetings once a week could be revived that he might again get the help and advice of Norton and Lowell for a revised text and additional commentary for a new edition of his *Divine Comedy*. As Norton wrote later in 1882 of Longfellow: "Since this year came in he had proposed that before long, perhaps when Lowell should come home, we should all look over his version once more, and see what emendations might be made in it and in the comment."¹⁹¹ But this was not to be. On March 24, 1882, came Longfellow's death.

Four days later, Professor Norton wrote to James Russell Lowell, who was still in England, as follows:

Shady Hill. March 28, 1882.

My dear James,

You have been much in my thoughts during these last days. I have wished that you were here, and I have felt how much you would wish to be here. I have known how deeply Longfellow's death would touch you. It is an immeasurable change and loss for us who have known him so long and loved him so well. His friendship has been one of the steadiest and longest blessings of my life. It dates back almost half a century. . . . In all this time I have not a single recollection of him that is not sweet, pleasant, and dear. It is a delightful retrospect. Even the memory of his sorrow is beautiful. His life has been an essential part of the spiritual atmosphere of yours and mine. . . . The funeral services on Sunday were in all respects what they should have been. The coffin was in the library—the large back room—and here were the friends, while the immediate family were in the study. George Curtis came from New York, and was with me. The most striking incident was Emerson's solitary approach to the coffin, and his long gaze at the face of the dead. Only the family and a few intimate friends went to the grave at Mt. Auburn. Emerson was there, his memory gone, his memory wavering, but his face pure and noble as ever though with strange looks of perplexity wandering over it from time to time. The afternoon was raw, gray, March-like. Emerson took my arm up the path to the grave, and his arm shook as we stood together there.¹⁹²

As Emerson and Norton left the grave there on the crest of Indian Ridge at Mount Auburn, they could hear the muffled chimes of the Cambridge church bells far off through the quietly falling snow.

Aftermath

Two months later, on Tuesday, May 16, 1882, the annual meeting of the Dante Society was held at Mr. John Woodbury's house at 17 Kirkland Street. "The meeting was called to order by Professor Norton. . . . Professor Norton in opening the meeting spoke of the irrefutable loss the Society had suffered in the loss of its first President. . . . After the meeting Professor Norton read to the Society the paper on Mr. Longfellow's connections with the study of Dante."¹⁹³ At the end of this he said:

The gratitude of our Society is due to him, both for the work he did in promoting the love and knowledge of the poet of whom we profess ourselves the students, and for his consenting to act as our President. His memory will be cherished in our Society with especial honor. In our Dante Library his bust shall stand opposite that of his and our Master.¹⁹⁴

In the list of members published in the report of that annual meeting of the Dante Society, among the forty-nine names listed there was one, and

at that time one only, against whose name a star was printed, indicating that the member was deceased. This was the name of Longfellow. His death made necessary the election of new officers and at this same meeting, James Russell Lowell was elected to fill the presidency and Charles Eliot Norton, the vice-presidency.

James Russell Lowell was still in England as American minister at the Court of St. James. Never before had monuments to great men of other countries been admitted to a place in Westminster Abbey, but now an exception was to be made in the case of Longfellow. It was scarcely a century since the end of the War of Independence, yet England was glad to honor an American poet by placing his bust in the Poets Corner near the Monuments of Chaucer and Dryden. The Prince of Wales, the Poet Laureate, Alfred Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, and many other English authors, were on the Longfellow Memorial Committee. At the unveiling of the marble bust of Longfellow in Westminster Abbey on March 2, 1884, Earl Granville spoke of "those relations of a moral and intellectual character which become bonds stronger and greater every day between the intellectual and cultivated classes of these two great countries" and introduced James Russell Lowell to speak as the official representative of the United States.¹⁹⁵ Lowell spoke of Longfellow's sympathy with other literatures, of the simplicity and distinction of his writing, of the beauty and perfection of his sonnets, of his own forty years of friendship with Longfellow and spoke of Westminster Abbey as having become "the Valhalla of the whole English speaking race."¹⁹⁶

During Lowell's absence in England the annual meetings of the Dante Society were held in the home of the vice president, Professor Norton, at Shady Hill. After Lowell's return to this country, however, one of the meetings, the ninth annual meeting, was held in Lowell's study at Elmwood on May 20, 1890. In the following year, on August 12, 1891, Lowell, in turn, died, and at the annual meeting, held again at Shady Hill, on May 17, 1892, Professor Norton, who had now been elected president, paid his tribute in turn to Lowell, speaking of the character of the instruction given by Mr. Lowell, as professor, to his classes in Dante, reading some extracts from Lowell's unpublished letters and lectures on Dante, and referring to Lowell as the "first among the interpreters of Dante to the English-speaking race."¹⁹⁷

In the *Annual Report of the Dante Society* for 1892, in the list of members, Lowell's name had joined that of Longfellow's as one of the names to bear the star. They were the first two *stelligeri*.¹⁹⁸

Sometime later, on October 21, 1908, came Norton's own death and his name in turn was added to the now increasing number of those bearing stars. Since then, though new members have been added to take their place, those who met here in Longfellow's study sixty years ago have died and one by one more stars have appeared on the roster of the membership of the Dante Society, till they have almost outnumbered the living members. Yet, as Dante peopled his universe, not only with the living, but also with the dead, to whom his poem gave immortality, so, for our Dante Society, the dead are also living.¹⁹⁹

List of illustrations

1. Henry Wadsworth, "Journal Kept on Board the United States Ship Chesapeake [*sic*] . . ." June 15, 1802–September 16, 1803, Wadsworth-Longfellow Family Papers, 1610–1971, Henry Wadsworth (1785–1804) Papers Series, box 14, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site. Courtesy National Park Service.
2. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, "Longfellow and Dante," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana Papers (LONG 17314), box 129, folder 5 "Early Draft of Manuscript," subfolder labeled "Sonnets on the Divine Comedy," Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site. Courtesy National Park Service.
3. Fragment found at the end of the folder containing Longfellow, [Translation of *Purgatorio* 1–15], 1843, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (110). Courtesy Houghton Library, Harvard University.

NOTES

1. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, "Longfellow and Dante," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana Papers (LONG 17314), Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, box 129.

2. Henry Wadsworth, "Journal Kept on Board the United States Ship Chesapeake [*sic*] . . ." June 15, 1802–September 16, 1803, Wadsworth-Longfellow Family Papers, 1610–1971, Henry Wadsworth (1785–1804) Papers Series, box 14, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

3. *Paradise Lost* 1:302–3.

4. George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt* (London, 1812).

5. See, for example, George Lowell Austin, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: His Life, His Works, His Friendships* (Boston, 1883), 39, who makes the error, and William Sloane Kennedy, *Henry W. Longfellow: Biography, Anecdote, Letters, Criticism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1882), 25, who corrects it: "It has been

several times stated that the first poem of his, known to be preserved in manuscript, is that called 'Venice, an Italian Song,' and dated Portland Academy, March 17, 1820, when he was hardly thirteen. But the writer is informed by Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson that this is a mistake. The poem is by Samuel Rogers, and may be found in his printed works. The poem had only been copied by the boy-poet as an exercise in penmanship." Longfellow had in fact included Rogers's poems on Venice in his collection, *Poems of Places* (Boston, 1877), 13:153–56; see Samuel Rogers, *Italy: A Poem, Part the First* (London, 1823), 59 ff.

6. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Complete Writings of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, "Craigie" edition, 11 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, The Riverside Press, 1904), 1:332–34.

7. *Ibid.*, 1:332–34.

8. Longfellow, [Poems by H. W. L. in the *United States Literary Gazette*], Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (235), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

9. Longfellow, ed., *Poems of Places*, 31 vols. (Boston, 1876–79).

10. Longfellow to Samuel Longfellow, December 5, 1824, in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, ed. Andrew Hilen, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966–1982), 1:94: "I take this early opportunity to write to you, because I wish to know fully your inclination with regard to the profession I am to pursue when I leave college. / For my part, I have already hinted to you what would best please me. I want to spend one year at Cambridge for the purpose of reading history, and of becoming familiar with the best authors in polite literature; whilst at the same time I can be acquiring a knowledge of the Italian language, without an acquaintance with which I shall be shut out from one of the most beautiful departments of letters. The French I mean to understand pretty thoroughly before I leave college. After leaving Cambridge, I would attach myself to some literary periodical publication, by which I could maintain myself and still enjoy the advantages of reading. Now, I do not think that there is anything visionary or chimerical in my plan thus far. The fact is—and I will not disguise it in the least, for I think I ought not—the fact is, I most eagerly aspire after future eminence in literature; my whole soul burns most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centers in it. . . ."

11. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italianische Reise*, in *Goethes Werke*, vol. 10 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1981).

12. Madame de Staël, *De la littérature, considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales: Suivi de l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations* (Paris, [1800]).

13. Longfellow to Samuel Longfellow, December 23, 1826, in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 1:208.

14. Longfellow, *The Golden Legend, Complete Writings*, 5.

15. Dante Alighieri, *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri pubblicata da A. Buttura*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1820). The pocket-size Paris edition is among the Dante volumes still kept at Longfellow House. Because of its miniature dimension, it is housed separately from the main library collection in the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers Collection, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, Series XVII, Separated Materials, Subseries 7, "Literary Career," box 57. The inscription on the title page of each of the three volumes reads: "GWGreene / Paris October / .9.1827 / to his friend HWLongfellow / Rome 11 April 1828"; see J. Chesley Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," *ESQ: Journal of the American Renaissance* 62 (Winter 1971), item 11, as well as my edited version of Mathews's bibliography in the present volume.

16. Longfellow to George Washington Greene, April 3, 1867, used by Greene as a dedication in the Riverside edition of his work: *The Life of Nathanael Greene: Major-General in the Army of the Revolution*, 3 vols. (Boston and Cambridge, 1890), 1:iii–v, and quoted in Samuel Longfellow, ed., *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from his Journals and Correspondence* (Boston, 1886), 1:146–47.

17. Longfellow, *The Golden Legend, Complete Writings*, 5:316–17.

18. Longfellow, *Outre-Mer, Complete Writings*, 7:282. The omitted text indicated by the ellipsis reads, "or 'Bandello's laughing tale,'" a reference to the novellas of Matteo Bandello.

19. Longfellow, [Journal], December 16, 1827–April 24, 1829, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (173), entry for December 11, 1828. Not in Samuel Longfellow, *Life*.

20. Longfellow, [Journal, Italy and Germany], April 10, 1828–April 7, 1829, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (178), entry for December 11, 1828. Longfellow quotes *Inferno* 5.97–99, 121–23, and 127–38.

21. A quotation from Longfellow, *Michael Angelo*, in *Complete Writings*, 6:98.

22. Christoph Irmscher, *Public Poet, Private Man: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at 200* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 36 ff.

23. Longfellow, *Syllabus de la Grammaire Italienne* (Boston, 1832), 33–35.

24. *Ibid.*, 102–3.

25. Longfellow, *Saggi de' novellieri italiani d'ogni secolo: tratti da' più celebri scrittori* (Boston, 1832), vi. The quotation from Dante is *Inferno* 5.126.

26. Longfellow, *On the Origin and Growth of the Languages of Southern Europe and of their Literature* (Brunswick, Maine: Bowdoin College Library, 1907), 40.

27. Longfellow, "Defence of Poetry," review of *The Defence of Poesy*, by Sir Philip Sidney, republished in the *Library of Old English Prose Writers*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass., 1831) in *North American Review* 34 (January 1832): 62. According to Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 7:10, Longfellow inserted a slightly revised version of this review into the 1835 edition of *Outre-Mer*. See Longfellow, *Outre-Mer* (New York, 1835), 2:215, for the above-quoted passage.

28. Longfellow, "History of the Italian Language and Dialects," *North American Review* 35 (1832): 299; see also *Prose Works of Longfellow* (Chatto and Windus, 1878), 723, and Longfellow, "Italian Language and Poetry," in *The Poets and Poetry of Europe* (Philadelphia and Cambridge, 1845), 503.

29. Longfellow, [Records of Harvard Classes], 1837–1854, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (4). See p. 5 (1837) for a mention of Thoreau, and p. 43 (1841) for a mention of Lowell.

30. The reference here is to a letter of James Russell Lowell to George Bailey Loring, August 9, 1838, James Russell Lowell Papers, MS Am 765 (50), Houghton Library, Harvard University. In fact, Horace Elisha Scudder, *James Russell Lowell: A Biography*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1901), 1:54, mistakenly transcribes the cited passage as "I feel as a queer as woman does probably (unmarried of course) when she finds herself in what Dante calls 'mezzo cammin del [sic] nostro [sic] vita.'" Charles Eliot Norton's edition of *Letters of James Russell Lowell* (New York, 1894), 1:30, provides a brief excerpt and summary of the letter but excludes this passage. From my own inspection of the original letter, it seems that Lowell may have initially intended to write *della* but then blotted out the *lla* such that resulting mark looks somewhat like an overwrought *l*, which would explain the first part of Scudder's error. The second error, mistaking what is clearly an *a* at the end of *nostra*, is a simple transcription fault, probably influenced by the mistake of reading the preceding article as masculine. In standard editions of Dante's works, the passage from *Inferno* 1.1 reads: "mezzo cammin di nostra vita."

31. James Russell Lowell, *Class Poem* (Cambridge, Mass., 1838). In a letter to Longfellow dated February 27, 1867, Lowell wrote: "On looking back, I find that our personal intercourse is now of near thirty years' date. It began on your part, in a note acknowledging my 'Class-poem' much more kindly than it deserved" (Norton, *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, 1:378). Curiously, Longfellow's note to Lowell does not appear to be among the other items of their correspondence preserved at Houghton Library, nor does either Houghton Library or Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site have a copy of the work that includes an autograph or inscription from Lowell to Longfellow.

32. James Russell Lowell to Longfellow, August 13, 1845, in Norton, *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, 1:98.

33. Longfellow to Stephen Longfellow, September 11, 1838, in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2:102. While the second part of the quoted passage is indeed from this letter, it is possible that the first part, which is marked off as a quotation in Dana's typescript, is a passage from yet another letter which I have not been able to locate. The full passage from the cited letter reads: "I have made a new arrangement about my board—living with Miss Lowell in close communion. She is only seventy two, and a good deal like [a] fly, brisk and buzzy."

34. The house at 105 Brattle Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was originally built in 1759 for John Vassall, a Loyalist who fled the city upon the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Thereafter, George Washington set up his first official headquarters as commander of the Continental Army in the abandoned home. Washington's apothecary general, Andrew Craigie, purchased the home around 1791 or 1792. Craigie died in debt in 1819, so his widow, Elizabeth, took in boarders to help support herself. Longfellow began renting rooms in the summer of 1837 following his arrival in Cambridge to take up the duties of his professorship in modern languages at Harvard. He became the owner of the home in 1843, when his father-in-law, Nathan Appleton, purchased it as a wedding gift, and lived there the rest of his life. Nevertheless, Longfellow and his family members and friends continued to refer to the home by the name of its former owner. For example, in a letter to George Washington Greene on 27 September 1874 (*Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 5:775), Longfellow wrote: "We shall all be delighted to see you and Anna under the roof of Craigie Hall, or Craigie Castle, or Craigie House, as you may please to call it." Although no biographer appears to have made the association, it seems possible that the epithet "Craigie Castle" could be an allusion to the ruined fortress of the same name in Scotland.

35. The reference to "Aunt Sally" is puzzling, for I can find no corroborating citations in biographies of Lowell or in his correspondence that suggest that he referred to his aunt in this manner.

36. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 1:353.

37. Charles Sumner to Henry Russell Cleveland, November 28, 1842, Charles Sumner correspondence, MS Am 1 (1308), Houghton Library, Harvard University. Note: Dana transcribed the date of this letter as November 29, but Houghton Library has it correctly cataloged as November 28 (the 8 is, in fact, indistinct and can be mistaken for a 9).

38. Charles Eliot Norton to Longfellow, September 25, 1879, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, MS Am 1340.2 (4150).

39. Longfellow to Mary Appleton, December 10, 1837, in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2:50.

40. Longfellow, "I. Life of Dante," [Lectures on Dante], Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (106), p. 3.

41. Longfellow, "II. Divina Commedia," [Lectures on Dante], Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (106), pp. 89–90.

42. Dante Alighieri, *Opere poetiche di Dante Alighieri, con note di diversi per diligenza e studio di Antonio Buttura*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1823), Houghton Library *AC85 L8605 Zy823d. A copy of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust, eine Tragödie* (Paris, 1843) preserved in Houghton Library (*AC85 L8605 Y843g) contains interleaved pages with notes from Longfellow's lectures taken by Charles F. Dunbar, Harvard College, 1851. If Longfellow made up his own interleaved copy of Faust, it is not among the many volumes of his library still present at Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, nor among those that were transferred to Houghton Library.

43. Longfellow, *Voices of the Night* (Cambridge, Mass., 1839).

44. See *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2:189 n. 2.

45. Longfellow, [Journal], May 22, 1842–October 2, 1842, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (196). Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 1:404, reproduces the sonnet but not the journal entry.

46. In the "early version," the word "above" is inserted above the word "behind" and an additional phrase ("that seemed to be the sound of death") is appended to the end of the sentence.

47. For the version editors have considered final, see Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 1:260. The differences from the version that Dana cites are numerous.

48. Longfellow, *Poems on Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass., 1842).

49. Longfellow to Catharine Eliot Norton, March 9, 1843, in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2:514. Note that Hilén standardizes the spelling of her name to "Catherine."

50. Longfellow to Catharine Eliot Norton, March 21, 1843, in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, *Letters*, 2:521.

51. Longfellow, [Translation of *Purgatorio* 1–15], 1843, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (110).

52. Catharine Eliot Norton to Longfellow, March 17, 1843, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, MS Am 1340.2 (4147).
53. *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2:487; Hilen transcribes the passage from Longfellow's journal as follows: "Written be the date in red letters! One year ago I met my beloved Fanny after so long and tedious a separation, and we began once more to draw near unto each other. It was at the Norton's—in the corner window—the day and the Evening shall be kept as a holiday and be blessed for evermore." The reading "tedious" in place of "tender" makes more sense contextually and may be a reference to Antoine Houdar de La Motte, *One Hundred New Court Fables: Written for the Instruction of Princes, and a True Knowledge of the World*, trans. Robert Samber (London, 1721), 30: "Now I cannot tell which is predominant in this Image, either the Danger of the Voyage, or the Restlessness occasioned by a Friend's Absence, or the Pleasure of his Return after so long and tedious a Separation."
54. Longfellow, journal entry for May 10, 1844, written on the first anniversary of his engagement, cited in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2:487–88.
55. In the appendix of "illustrations" found at the end of the 1867 and subsequent editions of his translation of *Inferno*, Longfellow included a translation of the "Letter of Frate Ilario" from Ferdinando Arrivabene's *Il secolo di Dante, commento storico necessario all'intelligenza della Divina commedia*.
56. Longfellow, "Dante," *Complete Writings*, 1:262. Dana's transcription exhibits differences in punctuation.
57. Longfellow, ed., *The Poets and Poetry of Europe, with Introductions and Biographical Notices by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Philadelphia and Cambridge, Mass., 1845).
58. Compare Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:107, which somewhat abridges this entry.
59. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:135.
60. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, "Dante's *Divina commedia*, from the German, by H. W. Longfellow," in *Graham's American Monthly Magazine of Literature and Art* 34 (June 1850): 351–54.
61. Longfellow to Henry Beck Hirst, February 21, 1850, in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 3:244.
62. Longfellow's journal for April 18, 1849, Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:151. Longfellow also makes earlier references to Schelling essay in his journal (Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:36). See April 18, 1846: "Translating Schelling's paper on 'Dante in a philosophical point of view'; deep,—obscure, rather. To the student of Dante, interesting, though throwing much 'darkness visible' upon the subject to minds not philosophic"; and April 23, 1846: "Commenced a course of lectures on Dante. Read to the class Schelling's essay. It must have been darkness deep to them."
63. Longfellow to Henry Beck Hirst, February 21, 1850, in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 3:244.
64. These appeared only in the second edition of Longfellow, *Prose Works* (Boston, 1857). The translations of Schelling's essay was also included among the appendix of "illustrations" in the 1867 and later editions of Longfellow's translation of *Paradiso*.
65. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:186.
66. *Ibid.*, 2:187 n. 1.
67. George Stillman Hillard to Longfellow, January 12, 1848, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, MS Am 1340.2 (2733), reproduced in Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:107–8. The reference to "vaporous amethyst" is from Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Euganean Hills," which Longfellow included in his *Poems of Places*, 1:116–19.
68. Longfellow, [Records of Harvard Classes], 1837–1854, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (4).
69. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:232.
70. Longfellow, [Journal], January 1, 1852–August 31, 1853, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (205), entry for February 2, 1853. Not in Samuel Longfellow, *Life*.
71. Charles Eliot Norton to Longfellow, January 15, 1859, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, MS Am 1340.2 (4150).
72. Charles Eliot Norton to Longfellow, May 14, 1859, *ibid.*

73. Quoted in Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 9:18.
74. Charles Eliot Norton, *The New Life of Dante: An Essay, with Translations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1859).
75. Longfellow to Charles Sumner, June 13, 1859, Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:337. Note that Dana erroneously named Greene as the recipient.
76. Longfellow, "Enceladus," *Complete Writings*, 3:65–67.
77. Charles Eliot Norton, *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (Boston, 1859).
78. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:351.
79. Longfellow, "Christmas Bells," *Complete Writings*, 3:133–34.
80. Longfellow, "The Cross of Snow," *Complete Writings*, 3:220.
81. Longfellow to George W. Curtis, September 28, 1861, in Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:370.
82. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:376.
83. Robert Browning, *Balaustion's Adventure, Including a Transcript from Euripides* (London, 1871).
84. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:377.
85. Longfellow, "Three Cantos of Dante's *Paradiso*," *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (January 1864), 47–55. The marginal glosses that Coleridge added to his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* first appeared in the anthology of his verse, *Sibylline Leaves: A Collection of Poems* (London, 1817).
86. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:381.
87. Charles Eliot Norton to Longfellow, February 3, 1863, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, MS Am 1340.2 (4150).
88. Charles Eliot Norton to Longfellow, March 1, 1863, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, MS Am 1340.2 (4150).
89. Longfellow to James T. Fields, March 23, 1863, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, Houghton Library, MS Am 1340.1 (1284).
90. Longfellow to George Washington Greene, April 2, 1863, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, MS Am 1340.1 (1286). *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 4:318, reads "have" instead of "had."
91. Compare Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 9:21. The published version reads "cathedral," "repeat his paternosters" and "minster-gate," and includes commas after "burden," "Enter," "day to day," and "prayer."
92. Compare Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 9:22. The published version does not have a comma after "statues."
93. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:393, journal entry for April 30, 1863. In this sentence, "had" and "to the fact" are inserted in pencil in the copy of this page in the early draft version. Since they seemed to be appropriate additions, I included them here.
94. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:395, journal entry for November 27, 1863.
95. Longfellow to George Washington Greene, January 18, 1865, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, MS Am 1340.1 (1429).
96. Longfellow to Charles Sumner, February 10, 1865, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, MS Am 1340.1 (1435). For an in-depth investigation of the ownership history of the privately printed copies of Longfellow's translation, see Joan Nordell, "Search for the Ten Privately Printed Copies of Longfellow's Translation of the *Divine Comedy* 'In Commemorazione del secentesimo Anniversario della Nascita di Dante Alighieri,'" *Harvard Library Bulletin*, n.s., 16, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 5–36, reprinted in this volume.
97. In the early draft version, a penciled note above "ten" reads "12." Dana's source for the information contained in this paragraph is an unpublished letter to him from Carroll A. Wilson, May 16, 1941, in which Wilson states: "The source for the '10 copies' is clearly the white paper wrapper you refer to, which is copied as far back as Livingston, p. 67, so that you are not in the unpleasant position of having only your own copy to refer to. Norton's early note corroborates. / I think the '5 copies to Italy' is a myth . . ." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana Papers (LONG 17314), box 129, folder 7, "Italy—Dante—Research Correspondence, 1938–1949."
98. The early draft version includes a penciled annotation "any authentic" above the words "the original" in this sentence.

99. Longfellow to George Washington Greene, April 20, 1864, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, MS Am 1340.1 (1380).
100. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, Translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 3 vols. (Boston, 1867). For a discussion of the concurrent issue of the 1867 commercial edition by Routledge (London) and Tauchnitz (Leipzig) as well as comparison with subsequent commercial editions and the initial private printing, see Irmscher, *Public Poet, Private Man*, 162 ff. In the early draft version, the words "and end" are circled in blue pen. In fact, the two sonnets included in each volume appear together at the beginning in the 1867 and subsequent commercial editions. This seems an odd mistake for Dana to make considering how carefully he worked out the chronology of the composition of the sonnets.
101. Compare Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 10:3. The published version has a period following "tomb to tomb."
102. Compare Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 10:4. The published version has "And while with stern rebuke," "And gushing," "on some dark forest," "being at last" and other variations in punctuation and capitalization. This second sonnet actually appears right after the first in the 1867 and subsequent commercial editions. See above, note 100.
103. Compare Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 11:3.
104. James Russell Lowell, "Dante," in *The New American Cyclopædia*, ed. George Ripley and Charles A. Dana, 16 vols. (New York, 1858–63), 6:256.
105. James Russell Lowell, "Dante," in James Russell Lowell, *Among My Books*, 2nd ser. (Boston and Cambridge, Mass., 1870), 100–101. Note that Dana cites a later edition printed in 1876.
106. Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 6:347.
107. Compare *ibid.*, 10:4. The published version reads "Through all the nations," and "As of a mighty wind," "thy wondrous word." There is also an exclamation point after "liberty" and no comma after "amazed."
108. This last sentence appears on a separate page 28 in the early draft version as well as at the top of page 55 in the final version, where it is crossed out (see note 136, below). On page 28, beneath the typed sentence, Dana has added in pencil: "dubio al pie del vero" [*sic*]—a reference to *Paradiso* 4.131: "a piè del vero il dubbio." There is also an additional penciled inscription: "1867 Letter Freilegraph . . . 'the last six years'"—evidently a reference to a letter of Longfellow to Ferdinand Freilegraph, which he decided not to incorporate in his text.
109. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:47. The inscription is the subject of Longfellow's sonnet "The Broken Oar" (Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 3:241–42).
110. Longfellow to George Washington Greene, January 15, 1866, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, MS Am 1340.1 (1497).
111. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:62.
112. Charles Eliot Norton, "Remarks of Mr. Norton," in *First Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 16, 1882* (Cambridge, Mass., 1882), 23–24, quoting *Inferno* 4.101–2.
113. A reference to Hamlet, act 5, scene 1: "Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow / of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy."
114. For Bone's entire account, see George Lowell Austin, *Longfellow: His Life, His Works, His Friends* (Boston, 1883), 352–61; an abridged version appears in Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:381–86.
115. A play upon Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table: Every Man His Own Boswell* (Edinburgh, 1859).
116. Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea* (New York: Harper, 1840).
117. William Dean Howells, *Literary Friends and Acquaintance: A Personal Retrospect of American Authorship* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900), 184.
118. Longfellow to Ernest Longfellow, November 17, 1865, in Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:65.
119. Longfellow to George Washington Greene, January 18, 1865, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, MS Am 1340.1 (1429).
120. Longfellow to Ernest Longfellow, March 10, 1866, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Letters to Various Correspondents, MS Am 1340.1 (1510).

121. Howells, *Literary Friends*, 184.
122. *Ibid.*, 183.
123. *Ibid.*, 185.
124. *Ibid.*, 186.
125. *Ibid.*, 189.
126. Longfellow to James Russell Lowell, January 12, 1866, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, MS Am 1340.2 (3564). The humorous page of verse titled "Dr. Longfellow's New Prescription / Commended to himself" begins "Make you a gargle of claret, / (Médoc 'll do) and don't spare it." Dana's typescript gives January 13 as the date, but Lowell clearly wrote January 12 after his initials at the end of the poem.
127. William Dean Howells, *Life in Letters of William Dean Howells*, ed. Mildred Howells (New York: Russell and Russell, 1928), 1:110.
128. Longfellow to James T. Fields, June 12, 1866, in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 5:57.
129. For the designation of May as "Dante's month," see below, note 183. "Once more to behold he stars" is a reference to the last line of *Inferno* (34.139).
130. The poem was first published in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* for February 27, 1867. See James Russell Lowell, *The Complete Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell*, ed. Horace Elisha Scudder (Boston, 1896), 330–31.
131. The manuscript is preserved in the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340.3 (13). On a separately numbered page 37 in the final version, Dana typed, "With these verses Lowell sent the following letter" and then began a handwritten transcription, "Elmwood, Feb. 27, 1867 / My dear Longfellow." He did not, however, complete the transcription, nor have I been able to locate the original letter, which does not appear to have been published.
132. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:85.
133. Norton to James Russell Lowell, October 19, 1866, in Sara Norton and M. A. De Wolfe Howe, eds., *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 1:293.
134. Longfellow, [Journal], January 1, 1863–December 17, 1869, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (210), entry for March 16, 1867. Not in Samuel Longfellow, *Life*.
135. Charles Eliot Norton to Aubrey de Vere, March 25, 1867, as excerpted in Norton and Howe, *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 1:294. The letter is also quoted by George H. Gifford, "A History of the Dante Society," *Seventy-Fourth Annual Report of the Dante Society, with Accompanying Papers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Dante Society of America, 1956), 5, who has adapted the paragraph from Dana's text.
136. This section appears on a page numbered 55 in the final and early draft versions. Above the heading "The Commentary" near the top of the page, both versions include the one-sentence paragraph found on the separate page 28 in the early draft version (see above, note 108), which, in the final version is crossed out and in the early draft version erased. This, along with the table of contents found in the early draft version, suggests that Dana had intended for this section to follow his discussion of the sonnets and to precede the section on the Dante Club. From the standpoint of the overall narrative, however, it seems to fit better here, so I have taken this editorial liberty in its placement.
137. Charles Eliot Norton to Longfellow, October 11, 1866, Letters to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, MS Am 1340.2 (4150).
138. A number of the principal reviews of Longfellow's translation are conveniently cited and summarized in Charles Wells Moulton, ed., *The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors*, 8 vols. (Buffalo, N.Y.: Moulton Publishing Company, 1904), 7:398–400. A comprehensive listing is provided by Theodore Wesley Koch, *Dante in America: A Historical and Bibliographical Study* (Boston, 1896), 98.
139. Charles Eliot Norton to James Russell Lowell, May 31, 1867. James Russell Lowell Papers, MS Am 765 (585). It is unclear which of the British critics Dana had in mind as neither the correspondence between Norton and Lowell nor the article on Longfellow's translation that they published in the *North American Review* (see below, note 141) contains any specific references. The English Dantist Henry Clark Barlow published the first of his three-part review of Longfellow's

translation in the London *Athenaeum* on May 18, 1867 (pp. 655–56), but his criticisms were mostly mild and implicit.

140. James Russell Lowell to Charles Eliot Norton to, June 5, 1867, James Russell Lowell Papers, MS Am 765 (98).

141. "Longfellow's Translation of the *Divine Comedy*," *North American Review*, vol. 105, no. 216 (July, 1867): 124–48. See also a previous essay by Norton, "Dante and his Latest English Translators," *North American Review* 104 (April 1866): 506–29.

142. James Russell Lowell to James Thayer, Sunday evening, October, 1867, in James Russell Lowell, *The Complete Writings of James Russell Lowell*, ed. by C. E. Norton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), 15:159–60.

143. Longfellow to John Neal, August 2, 1867, in Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:95. The final version of this page has blank spaces for the date and recipient. In keeping with Dana's style, I have included them in the text.

144. Longfellow to Bernard Roelker, February 12, 1868. A typescript of the letter may be found in the Harvard University Archives, Papers of Bernard Roelker, 1856–1941 (inclusive), HUG 1751, box 1. Roelker was a student of Longfellow's who went on to teach German at Harvard.

145. This sentence appears marked for deletion in the final version of the typescript; nevertheless it seemed appropriate to include.

146. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:35.

147. The sestet is written on a half sheet of paper, torn across the bottom, that is found at the end of the folder containing Longfellow, [Translation of *Purgatorio* 1–15], 1843, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (110). See above, note 51. In the original fragment, Longfellow spells "symmetry" with only one *m* and the second and third and fourth and fifth lines are evenly indented.

148. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, IV.ii.34.8–9. There is a marginal annotation on this page in the final version that reads, "Of Sonnet," which is followed by, "And strive to make my steps keep pace with thine"—the latter being the third line of Longfellow's first sonnet for *Purgatorio* (see above, notes 100 and 102).

149. William Dean Howells, "Mr. Longfellow's Translation of the *Divine Comedy*," *The Nation*, 4 (June 20, 1867): 492. Excerpted in Moulton, *Library of Literary Criticism*, 399.

150. George Ticknor to Longfellow, June 1, 1867, Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 2:436–37.

151. I have supplied "Holmes—" because the original typescript lacked the second parenthetical dash and a name appeared to be missing from the series.

152. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:99.

153. *Ibid.*, 99. See also *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 5:13. It is unclear whether the note accompanying the wreath has survived, and if so, where it is presently located.

154. Cited in *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 5:210, #2602 n. 1. Not in Samuel Longfellow, *Life*.

155. Quoted in *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson: 1851–1870*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon Jr. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 2:495. The account of the visit, which took place on July 15, 1868, is from the journal kept by Longfellow's sister, Anne, during her travels with the family in Europe in 1868–1869. The text was originally published by Edward Wagenknecht, ed., "A Visit to Farringford: Anne Longfellow Pierce," *Boston University Studies in English*, vol. 1, nos. 1–2 (1955): 96–98. The original journal is preserved in the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers (LONG 27930), Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, box 24, folder 3.

156. Oddly, the final version indicates that Longfellow's reception by Queen Victoria took place at Buckingham Palace, while on the corresponding page in the earlier draft version "Buckingham Palace" is crossed out and replaced by "Windsor." Various sources confirm that the audience took place at Windsor Castle.

157. The title for this section comes from the corresponding pages in the early draft version. In the final version, the paragraph that follows begins on the verso of the page numbered 55 (see note 136 above) without any heading and with no page numbering.

158. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:139. Dana has “*Divina commedia*” where the published version has “Divine Comedy”; the published version also has “a” new edition.
159. Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 6:72.
160. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:221.
161. Longfellow, *Complete Writings*, 3:204.
162. Longfellow, “Amalfi,” *Complete Writings*, 3:95 (final stanza).
163. Longfellow, “Travels by the Fireside,” *Complete Writings*, 3:85–86.
164. Longfellow, *Hyperion*, book 1, chapter 8, *Complete Writings*, 8:74.
165. Norton, “Remarks,” 24.
166. Norton to William Roscoe Thayer, July 29, 1904, quoted by Thayer in “Professor Charles Eliot Norton,” in Dante Society, *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Dante Society, 1909* (Boston, Mass.: Ginn, 1910), 2–3. Thayer’s article is also excerpted in Norton and Howe, *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 2:101. The passage is also quoted by Gifford, 6.
167. See Dante Society, [Minute book], Cambridge, Mass., 1881–1928, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (117). A copy of the quoted circular together with circulars for membership dues and subscriptions to the proposed printing of the commentary on the *Commedia* by Benvenuto da Imola are inserted loosely in the front of the volume.
168. Ibid. This paragraph is reproduced verbatim by Gifford, 6–7.
169. Norton to James Russell Lowell, in Norton and Howe, *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 2:116. This paragraph is reproduced verbatim by Gifford, 7.
170. A detailed history of the formation of the Dante Society and its early achievements may be found in my forthcoming essay, “Collecting and Reading Dante in America: Harvard College Library and the Dante Society,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 21, no. 1 (2010). This paragraph, excepting the last sentence, is reproduced verbatim by Gifford, 7.
171. *Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 4:382. This paragraph and the first two and a half sentences of the next are reproduced verbatim by Gifford, 7, without acknowledgement of their source.
172. Longfellow’s epithet is a play on words in Italian. “Can Grande” is a shortened form of “cane grande” or “big dog.” It is also a reference to Lord Can Grande della Scala, Dante’s patron and protector in Verona, and the recipient of a letter that explains the structure of the *Divina Commedia* and keys to its interpretation, which some Dante critics believe was written by Dante himself. For an in-depth treatments of the letter, see Robert Hollander, *Dante’s Epistle to Cangrande* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); and Zygmunt G. Barański, “*Chiosar con altro testo*”: leggere Dante nel Trecento (Fiesole: Cadmo, 2001).
173. Up to this point, this paragraph is reproduced verbatim by Gifford, 7.
174. The several fragments of wood from Dante’s coffin are cataloged as LONG 17243, Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site and described more fully by Mathews, “Longfellow’s Dante Collection,” item 120, though Mathews expresses doubt over whether the fragments were presented by Mr. or Mrs. Lawrence. Dana transcribed the name as “Laurence,” but comparison with other inscriptions and references indicates that the spelling was “Lawrence.” The other items pertaining to Dante’s coffin that are described in this paragraph are kept in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers (LONG 27930), Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, box 4, folder 68.
175. This medal has been cataloged as LONG 17238, Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site. A more detailed description may be found in Mathews, “Longfellow’s Dante Collection,” item 121 (b).
176. This medal has been cataloged as LONG 17237, Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site. A more detailed description may be found in Mathews, “Longfellow’s Dante Collection,” item 121 (a).
177. The various photographs described here are likely those that have been cataloged as LONG 4767, 4768, 4806 and contained in a folder cataloged as LONG 1711, Longfellow House – Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site. See Mathews, “Longfellow’s Dante Collection,” items 123–25 and 126, esp. a, b, c, f, g, and h.

178. The Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site catalog includes a record for a statue of Dante that stands approximately 24 inches (LONG 4639). The statue is described more fully by Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," item 122.

179. The miniature volume described here is *La Divina commedia di Dante* (Milan, 1878), which is kept in the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers (LONG 27930), Series XVII, Separated Materials; Subseries 7, "Literary Career," box 57. A more detailed description may be found in Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," item 23.

180. Quoted in Gifford, 7. The minutes from the meeting may be found in the Dante Society Minute Book, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (117), p. 9, entry for February 11, 1881.

181. Ibid. According to the minutes, the committee consisted of "Mrs. Perkins, Knapp, and Woodbury." This paragraph is reproduced verbatim by Gifford, 7–8.

182. A record of this meeting may be found in the Dante Society Minute Book, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (117), pp. 10–11, entry for March 17, 1881. This paragraph is reproduced verbatim by Gifford, 8.

183. The Dante Society Minute Book does not include a record of this gathering, nor have I found any other reference to it. This paragraph is reproduced verbatim by Gifford, 8. An announcement concerning the organization of the Dante Society was published in the *Harvard University Bulletin*, no. 18, or vol. 2, no. 5 (April 1, 1881), 173. I have not found a corresponding announcement in the digital archives of *The Nation* (<http://www.thenation.com/archive>, accessed January 1, 2011.). Copies of the printed by-laws and membership prospectuses may be found loosely inserted in the first few pages of the Dante Society Minute Book (see above, note 162). The by-laws are also reproduced in each volume of the society's annual report.

184. Dante was born in the middle of May in 1265. In the remarks he offered at the annual meeting of Dante Society on May 16, 1882, Norton also referred to May as "Dante's month" (see Norton, "Remarks," 24).

185. The typescript has "five" typed over "seven," but Joseph Gilbert Thorp married Anne Allegra Longfellow on 14 October 1885, and so four years after the first meeting of the Dante Society on 21 May 1881.

186. A record of the meeting may be found in the Dante Society Minute Book, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (117), entry for May 21, 1881, pp. 12–13. This paragraph is reproduced verbatim by Gifford, 8.

187. A fuller discussion of this episode may be found in my forthcoming essay, "Collecting and Reading Dante in America." See also the letter of Charles Eliot Norton to James Russell Lowell, December 1, 1881, James Russell Lowell Papers, MS Am 765 (601): "Accordingly a meeting of the other members of the Council of the Society has been held to approve this decision, and in a few days a circular will be issued, giving a brief statement of facts, and withdrawing our proposals of publication." Copies of the circulars have been loosely inserted in the front of the Dante Society Minute Book (see above, note 166).

188. See Dante Society, *First Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 16, 1882* (Cambridge, Mass., 1882), 13–14: "The Society has reproduced this year for its members the well-known mask, of which there is a tradition, that it was taken from the face of Dante after death. This mask, which represents the Poet as he appeared in the later years of his life, bears a striking resemblance to the youthful portrait attributed to Giotto, on the wall of the Bargello in Florence. . . . The reproductions were made from the copy of the mask belonging to Mr. C. C. Perkins." I have not otherwise seen or found references to this reproduction of the mask, except perhaps William Garrott Brown, "A List of Portraits in the Buildings of Harvard University," *Library of Harvard University Bibliographical Contributions* vol. 4, no. 53 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, 1898), 14, which lists a "Plaster cast of Kirkup's mask; given by the Dante Society. *Gore Hall, Librarian's Room.*"

189. It is not clear whether Dana meant by this to include a photograph of the mask as an illustration in an eventual published version of his essay. The Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site finding aids and catalog do not mention any such reproduction of Dante's death mask or an accompanying circular. Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection,"

item 126 (h) describes four photographs giving different views of the death mask, but these were given to Longfellow by Norton in 1860. Dana's imperfect Italian quotation may be a reference to *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, ed. Oscar Kuhns (New York and Boston, 1897), xiv: "He [Dante] is said to have owned property at Gargnano, near Verona, where he wrote the *Purgatory*. His daughter married into the Veronese family of Serego, the descendants of whom are still living. We can almost see the sad and melancholy figure of the poet as he moved silently among the brilliant courtiers of the court of Can Grande, looking so stern and grim that the women in the streets whispered to each other, '*Ecco l'uomo che è stato nell' inferno*'—"Behold the man who has been in hell.'"

190. Charles Eliot Norton, ed., "Additional Notes on the *Divine Comedy* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow," *Fourth Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 19, 1885* (Cambridge, Mass., 1885), 15–31.

191. Norton, "Remarks," 24–25.

192. Norton to James Russell Lowell, March 28, 1882, in Norton and Howe, *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 2:130–2.

193. Dante Society, [Minute book], Cambridge, Mass., 1881–1928, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, MS Am 1340 (117), 14. The original minute book has "irreparable loss."

194. Norton, "Remarks," 25.

195. Samuel Longfellow, *Life*, 3:347.

196. *Ibid.*, 3:348.

197. Dante Society, *Eleventh Annual Report of the Dante Society, May 17, 1892* (Cambridge, Mass., 1892), 10.

198. The use of "stelligeri" here is possibly an allusion to Barrett Wendell, *Stelligeri, and Other Essays Concerning America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893).

199. The earlier draft version has "the" Dante Society.

Longfellow's Dante Collection

J. CHESLEY MATHEWS
Edited by CHRISTIAN Y. DUPONT

Editor's Note

The following is an edited version of a bibliographical catalog of the Dante-related volumes in the personal library of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that Joseph Chesley Mathews published some forty years ago in the *Emerson Society Quarterly*.¹ Given the theme of this special issue of *Dante Studies*, we are grateful to the current editors of *ESQ* for their kind permission to reproduce the substance of the original catalog and to incorporate additional material.

The present version preserves Mathew's introduction and his organization, ordering, and numbering of the items in order to facilitate its use by those who may be familiar with the original publication or who may find citations to it elsewhere. Capitalization, punctuation, and other aspects of formatting have been regularized, and incomplete bibliographical information, such as the names of various publishers, have been supplied—in some cases from an inspection of the items themselves; in many others, by consulting standard bibliographical sources. In addition, the current catalog designations used by the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site archives have been incorporated in brackets at the end of each entry (i.e., the LONG number). In a few instances, it was not possible to locate the item described by Mathews and hence to provide a current catalog designation; these are indicated by an asterisk.

During several visits to the Longfellow House, I was able to view about half of the volumes firsthand. Because they form part of the library maintained in the original bookcases in the main house, it was not practical to handle them all. Nor did I consider it necessary, for in every case I found

that Mathew's transcriptions of autographs and inscriptions were entirely accurate and his general approach to describing the volumes precise and consistent. To Mathews's annotations, I have added a few notes of my own in brackets, but I refrained from including more formal descriptions of bindings and other copy-specific features. I also incorporated in braces some additional information gleaned from the typed index cards that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana created in the 1930s and 1940s as an inventory of the library and historic objects preserved in the home. In these cases, I only included such information as did not already appear in Mathews's annotations (it is likely, in fact, that Mathews consulted the cards himself). I did not incorporate the shelf mark or other location designations since the references were not always evident. By the same token, I did not record the pricing data included on some of the cards since it was not clear how or when they were obtained (though one might conjecture that they represent Dana's comparative valuations for insurance purposes).

For the many hours of patient and cheerful assistance given freely over the many months that I chipped away at this project, I wish to express my gratitude to Anita Israel, archives specialist at Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site. I likewise wish to acknowledge the hospitality and encouragement offered by site manager and museum curator James M. Shea.

Introduction

In view of the fact that from his late youth or early manhood until the end of his days, for a period of fifty-five years or so, Henry W. Longfellow was interested in Dante's life and writings, it seems worthwhile to record a list of the Dante books and articles which he accumulated and which, with one or two exceptions, are still in the Longfellow House, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The books which a man procures help to reveal the subjects and extent of his interests; similarly, the books given to him help to show what his donors knew his interests to be. Such an inventory would seem to be significant, then, as one of several important indications of Longfellow's extraordinary interest in the most famous writer of Italy.

The items in the collection have been listed in two principal groups: (I) writings of Dante and (II) writings about him or his works. In the

first, the writings in their original language have been placed first—in the following order: collected works, the *Divina Commedia*, parts of the *Commedia*, and other, or minor, works. Translations have been placed next, grouped by languages (English, Dutch, French, German), and, under each language, by titles (*Divine Comedy*, parts of the *Divine Comedy*, *New Life*, etc.). In the second principal group, books have been placed first, and pamphlets and offprints next. In all groups the items have been listed chronologically, according to the dates of publication.

Various bits of information besides title and place and date of publication have been added—for example, the date of Mr. Longfellow's acquisition of a book or the source from which he got it (when these facts are known), or inscriptions or signatures in a book, or some description of the size or binding of a book if either is unusual. Moreover, it seems not inappropriate to add, as an appendix or footnote, a list of a few miscellaneous Dante items other than books and pamphlets Longfellow accumulated. Longfellow's own writings have not been included in the list—such items as his essays on *Dante in Poets and Poetry of Europe* (Philadelphia, 1845) and in *Prose Works* (Boston, 1857); his Dante sonnets; and his 3-volume translation of the *Commedia* in its several editions.

Finally, the compiler of this list would like to express his thanks to Mr. H. W. L. Dana (now deceased) and Miss Anne Thorp, Longfellow's grandson and granddaughter, for generously allowing him to examine and read literary materials preserved in the Longfellow House; and to Mr. Thomas H. de Valcourt and Mr. Frank Buda (who oversee and manage the House) for their knowledgeable and helpful assistance and for their many courtesies, all given or shown most generously.

I. Dante's Works

A. In their Original Language

i. Collected Works

1. *Opere poetiche di Dante Alighieri, con note di diversi, per diligenza e studio di Antonio Buttura*. 4 v. Paris: Lefevre, 1823. [Houghton Library, Harvard University *AC85 L8605 .Zy823d]

Vol. I, *Poesie Liriche*; vol. II, *Inferno*; vol. III, *Purgatorio*; vol. IV, *Paradiso*. These volumes, of octavo size, were bound with a blank sheet of note

paper between every two printed sheets, so that a blank page for notes faced every printed page. Mr. Longfellow acquired this set while in Europe and made much use of it in his teaching and translating. On the blank sheets he wrote bits of original translation and various notes. This set has been deposited in the Houghton Library.

2. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, col commento del p. Baldassarre Lombardi, ora nuovamente arricchito di molte illustrazioni edite ed inedite*. 3 v. Florence: Leonardo Ciardetti, 1830. [LONG 1649–1654 and LONG 1655–1660]

Of a 6-vol. set: vol. I, *Inferno*; vol. II, *Purgatorio*; vol. III, *Paradiso*. Vols. IV, V and VI are labeled *Le Opere Minori di Dante* on the first, short-title page: vol. IV, *Prose di Dante Alighieri, precedute dal rimario e dall'indice delle voci e nomi proprj della Divina commedia* (Firenze: Ciardetti, 1830); vol. V, *Rime profane e sacre di Dante Alighieri, precedute dalla sua biografia e seguite dalle varianti della Divina commedia impressa in Udine nel 1823 e dalla serie dell'edizioni di questo poema* (Firenze: Ciardetti, 1830); vol. VI, *Le Egloghe latine, i trattati Del volgar eloquio e Della monarchia, e Le Epistole di Dante Alighieri, con dissertazioni e note a tutte le opere minori* (Firenze: Giuseppe Molini, 1841). [There are two sets, both quarter-bound in dark green calf over dark green and black paste papers. Neither set has inscriptions or bookplates.]

3. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, col commento del p. Baldassarre Lombardi, ora nuovamente arricchito di molte illustrazioni edite ed inedite*. 3 v. Florence: Leonardo Ciardetti, 1830. [LONG 1185–1187]

Of a 6-vol. set, in full vellum binding. Inscribed on flyleaf of vol. I, by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1854." Signature on flyleaf of vol. II and vol. III also. On the short-title page of vol. I he wrote: "Inferno contains 4720 lines / Purgatorio . . . 4755 lines / Paradiso . . . 4803 lines / Total 14,278" and on the flyleaf of III he wrote the three lines of Par. XII, 121–123, and this notation: "First division of Paradise I–IX / Second do. X–XXII / Third do. XXIII–XXXIII." [Also, loosely inserted into vol. I, there is a calling card of Edward J. Smith, with pen drawing on the back depicting the circles of Hell.]

ii. *Divina commedia*

4. *Dante, con l'espositione di M. Bernardino Daniello da Lucca, sopra la sua Comedia dell'Inferno, del Purgatorio & del Paradiso; nuovamente stampato, &*

posto in luce, con privilegio dell'illustrissima signoria di Venetia per anni xx.
Venice: Pietro da Fino, 1568. [LONG 1629]

{First edition in contemporary binding of tooled leather.}

5. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, corretta, e con brevi dichiarazioni, nel margine illustrata da messer Lodovico Dolci*. Venice: Domenico Farri, 1578. [LONG 1604]

Inscribed on title page: "Adams Jewett MD"; and on flyleaf, in HWL's hand: "Henry W. Longfellow / From A. Jewett, / 1873." The volume is small, with pages about 3 by 5 inches, and is bound in vellum.

6. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri nobile fiorentino ridotta miglior lezione dagli Accademici della Crusca*. Florence: Domenico Manzani, 1595. [*]
Inscribed: "To H W Longfellow on his birthday, Feb 27, 1867, from Robert Ferguson, Carlisle England."

7. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, edizione corretta, illustrata, ed accresciuta*. 4 v. Venice: Antonio Zatta, 1760. [LONG 1190–1192]

Vol. I, *Inferno*, is missing from the HWL collection. Vol. II, *Purgatorio*; vol. III, *Paradiso*; IV, *Illustrazioni alla Commedia di Dante Alighieri, composte dal signor Filippo Maria Rosa Morando*. Each volume inscribed on flyleaf in HWL's hand: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1868." On the flyleaf of vol. IV there are a few other notations by HWL. {"Volume 1, missing" in L's. hand.} In full vellum binding.

8. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri*. 3 v. Parma: Nel regal palazzo . . . co' tipi Bodoniani, 1796. [LONG 1218–1220]
Folio size. {Leather spine.}

9. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, con illustrazioni*. 4 v. Pisa: Dalla tipografia della Società letteraria, 1804–1809. [LONG 1200–1203]
Vol. I, *Inferno* (1804); vol. II, *Purgatorio* (1804); vol. III, *Paradiso* (1804); vol. IV, *Vita di Dante & Indici* (1809). Folio size, and bound partly in vellum. {Half vellum; large folio.}

10. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, col commento di G. Biagioli*. 3 v. Paris: Torchi di Dondey-Dupré, 1818–1819. [LONG 1630–1632]
Only vol. I dated 1818. Bound partly in vellum. Inscribed on flyleaf of each volume, in HWL's hand: "Henry W. Longfellow." A label inside the front cover reads: "Sold by Hilliard & Brown, Booksellers to the University, Cambridge, N.E."

11. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, pubblicata da A. Buttura*. 3 v. Paris: Lefevre, 1820. [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers]

(LONG 27930), Series XVII, Separated Materials; Subseries 7, Literary Career, box 57]

These volumes are the first three of the *Biblioteca Poetica Italiana, scelta e pubblicata da A. Buttura*. They are very small (the pages measure about 2 5/8 by 4 3/16 inches) and bound in paper. Vol. I, *Inferno*, contains a little picture of Dante (head and shoulders) and a design of Hell (pp. ii, xiv); vol. II, *Purgatorio*, a design of Purgatory (p. ii); vol. III, *Paradiso*, a design of the heavens (p. iv). The set was acquired by George Washington Greene in Paris in 1827, and given by him to his friend Longfellow in Rome in 1828. In each volume the title page for the series is inscribed, in Greene's hand, "GWGreene / Paris October / .9. 1827 / to his friend HWLongfellow / Rome 11 April 1828" (except that in vol. II, by a slip of the pen, Greene wrote 18 April). And on the outside of the front cover of vol. II is written, in HWL's hand, "Longfellow;" and on the front cover of vol. III, "H.W. Longfellow" and a quotation, "ogni dove / In cielo è Paradiso." [Par. 3:88–89] In the text, lines or passages are marked with pencil (by HWL?) on 3 different pages of vol. I, 12 pages of vol. II, and 9 pages of vol. III.

12. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, giusta la lezione del Codice Bartoliniano*. 4 v. Udine: Fratelli Mattiuzzi, 1823–1828. [LONG 1667–1670]

Vol. I and vol., 1823; vol. III, part 1, and vol. III, part 2, 1828. All four volumes have HWL's bookplate inside the front cover.

13. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, con commento analitico di Gabriele Rossetti, in sei volumi*. 6 v. London: John Murray, 1826–1827. [LONG 1718–1719]

Bound in paper. Inscribed on flyleaf of vol. I, in Greene's hand: "Al E.W. Longfellow."

14. *La Commedia di Dante Alighieri, col commento di N. Tommaseo*. 3 v. Venice: Co' tipi del Gondoliere, 1837. [LONG 1706–1708]

Bound in paper. Inscribed on flyleaf of vol. I, in Greene's hand: "Al E.W. Longfellow / pegno d'affetto / dal suo GWG / Roma il 5 Maggio 1840"; and on the outside of the front cover of all three volumes, in HWL's hand: "Henry W. Longfellow," with the date "1840" added in the case of vol. I.

15. *La Commedia di Dante Allighieri, illustrata da Ugo Foscolo*. 4 v. London: Pietro Rolandi, 1842–1845. [LONG 1702–1705]

Vols. I and II dated 1842; vol. III, 1843; and vol. IV, 1843. Vols. II and III are inscribed on the front cover, in HWL's hand: "Henry W. Longfellow." Bound in {green} paper.

16. *La commedia di Dante Allighieri, con illustrazioni antiche e moderne, pubblicata da m. Aurelio Zani de' Ferranti*. Paris, London, Bruxelles: Baudry, 1846. [LONG 1745]

Paperbound. Front cover inscribed by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow." The short-title page is inscribed, in Ferranti's hand (in a few places the writing is not clear): "[all'alti]ssimo / D.re H. W. Longfellow / memori[a] d[al] suo / M.A.Z. de'f." HWL called upon Signor Ferranti (who apparently was visiting Boston) on Oct. 31, 1846 (see HWL's Journal); presumably his former tutor gave HWL the book then or sent it to him soon afterward. {Tan cover (paper).}

17. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, ricorretta sopra quattro dei più autorevoli testi a penna, da Carlo Witte*. Berlin: Ridolfo Decker, 1862. [LONG 1613]

The book has HWL's bookplate inside the front cover, and is inscribed on the second flyleaf, in HWL's hand: "Henry W. Longfellow / From T. G. Appleton." Glued to the verso of the first flyleaf is a printed calling card of "Karl Witte / Geheimer Justizrath und / professor des Rechts / in Halle," and written on the card are the following words: "bei Herrn Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Cambridge, Massachusetts, erlaubt sich seinen Sohn, den Pastor Leopold Witte einzuführen, der für den grossen Dichter der neuen Welt, wie sein Vater, wärmste Verehrung hegt."

18. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri*. Naples: Giosuè Rondinella, 1863. [LONG 1675]

A very small volume, about 3 1/4 by 4 1/2 inches. Inscribed by HWL, on the front cover: "H.W.L."; and inside the front cover: "Henry W. Longfellow / Cadenabbia. Lago di Como. / Aug. 1868."

19. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, col commento cattolico di Luigi Bennassuti*. 4 v. Verona: Dallo Stabilimento Civelli, 1864–1868. [LONG 1181–1184]

Vol. I, *Inferno*, 1864; vol. II, *Purgatorio*, 1865; vol. III, *Paradiso*, 1868; vol. IV, *Tavole*, n. d.. Half vellum, quarto. HWL's bookplate is inside the front cover of all four volumes.

20. *Commedia di Dante Allighieri, con ragionamenti e note di Niccolò Tommaseo*. 4 v. Milan: Francesco Pagnoni, 1865. [LONG 1205–1208]

Large size (9 3/4 by 13 1/2 inches) {folio}, and bound half in vellum. Vol. I contains introductory materials and the *Inferno*; vol. II, *Purgatorio*; vol. 3 III, *Paradiso*; vol. IV, "magnifiche incisioni in rame ed in acciaio."

On the short-title page there is an inscription to HWL by N[iccolò] Tommaseo: "All'illustre poeta / che nella lingua di Guglielmo Shakespeare tradusse il poema sacro, / chi lo comentò e nella lingua di Virgilio ne recò qualche tratto / un nativo di sebenico onde venne a Venezia la famiglia di Marco Polo / All'abitatore del mondo senza gente / ove Dante poneva l'Oceano e Catone alle falde / in cima Beatrice e il fiume rinnovatore delle anime / porge sul bel fiume d'Arno nella patria d'Amerigo Vespucci / questo libro che sia tra' due mondi telegrafo elettrico / di verità, di bellezza, d'umanità generosa, / e ai cristiani raccomandi la pietà de' poveri Indiani, / agli inciviliti lo studio delle loro tradizioni e linguaggi. / N. Tommaseo."

21. *Il Codice Cassinese della Divina commedia, per la prima volta letteralmente messo a stampa per cura dei monaci benedettini della Badia di Montecassino*. Monte Cassino: Tipografia di Monte Cassino, 1865. [LONG 1204] {Large} folio size, and bound partly {half} in vellum. Title page inscribed: "Al più illustre degli Americani Poeti / Mr. Henry W. Longfellow / questo volume del Padre della moderna Poesia / da lui mirabilmente volto nell'Inglese favella / i Monaci di Monte Cassino donavano—2 Marzo 1869 —."

22. *La Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri, illustrata da Gustavo Doré e dichiarata con note tratte dai migliori commenti per cura di Eugenio Camerini*. Milan: Edoardo Sonzogno, 1868. [LONG 3118–3119] {Large} folio size, bound partly in morocco. Has HWL's bookplate inside the front cover.

23. *La Divina commedia di Dante*. Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1878. [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers (LONG 27930), Series XVII, Separated Materials; Subseries 7, Literary Career; box 57] An extremely small book, about 1 1/2 by 2 3/16 inches, and 3/4 inch thick. Bound in black leather, with gold lettering and tooling on spine and gold tooling on covers. The edges of the pages are colored red. The volume has a little black cardboard box it fits into.

24. *La Commedia di Dante Alighieri, raffermata nel testo giusta la ragione e l'arte dell'autore da Giambattista Giuliani*. Florence: Successori Le Monnier, 1880. [LONG 1677]

A small paperbound volume, about 3 by 4 1/2 inches. Inscribed on the short-title page: "All'insigne Dantista E. Longfellow / e ammirabile traduttore della D. Commedia / per grande e vivo ossequio / G. B. Giuliani."

Inferno

25. *L'Inferno di Dante Alighieri, disposto in ordine grammaticale e corredato di brevi dichiarazioni da G. G. Warren Lord Vernon* . . . 3 v. London: Printed in Florence by Thomas Baracchi for Thomas and William Boone, 1858–1865. [LONG 3110–3112]

Folio, quarter red morocco. Vol. I, 1858, contains text, notes, outlines, etc.; vol. II, *Documenti*, 1862; vol. III, *Album*, 1865. HWL's bookplate is inside the front cover of each volume. Also bound in vol. I {a letter}: "Sudbury Hall, Derby, 24 July, 1869. Sir, I have the honour of presenting you with a copy of the *Inferno* of Dante 'literally paraphrased' with *Documenti* and *Album* in 3 vols: fol: privately printed by my late Father George John Warren Lord Vernon. I remain your obedt Servant Vernon: H. W. Longfellow Esq^{re}."

iii. Other Works

26. *Amori e rime di Dante Alighieri*. Mantua: Co' tipi Virgiliani di L. Caranenti, 1823. [LONG 1676]

Quarter calf binding {16^{mo}}. HWL's bookplate is inside the front cover. Inscription (by X. Marmier? [=Xavier Marmier]) on verso of second flyleaf: "M. H. Longfellow / Paris June 1869."

27. *Vita nova di Dante Alighieri, secondo la lezione di un codice inedito del secolo xv colle varianti dell'edizioni più accreditate*. Pesaro: Tipografia Nobili, 1829. [LONG 1721]

Paperbound. Inscribed on the outside of the front cover by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1846."

28. *La Vita nuova e il Canzoniere di Dante Allighieri, ridotti a miglior lezione e commentati da Giambattista Giuliani*. Florence: Successori Le Monnier, 1868. [LONG 1776]

Paperbound. Inscribed on the short-title page: "All'insigne E. Longfellow / per altissima stima ed ossequio affettuoso / G. B. Giuliani."

29. *La Vita nuova di Dante Allighieri, ricorretta coll'ajuto di testi a penna ed illustrata da Carlo Witte*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1876. [LONG 1701]

Paperbound. Inscribed on the front cover by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1876"; inside the cover, by the editor: "Herrn Henry Wadsworth Longfellow als geringes Zeichen aufrichtiger Verehrung vom Herausgeber."

30. *Le Opere latine di Dante Alighieri, reintegrate nel testo con nuovi commenti da Giambattista Giuliani*. Vol. I. *De vulgari eloquentia e De monarchia*. Florence: Successori Le Monnier, 1878. [LONG 1775]
Paperbound {poor condition}.

B. In Translation

i. English

31. *The Vision; or Hell, Purgatory and Paradise of Dante Alighieri, translated by the Rev. Henry Francis Cary, A. M.* 2 v. Philadelphia: Samuel F. Bradford, 1822. [*]

McCarty & Davis, printers of vol. 1; William Brown, of vol. 2. The two volumes are from a fifty-volume series called *The Works of the British Poets, with Lives of the Authors*, edited by E. Sanford and Robert Walsh, Jr., and are volumes VI and VII of that part of the series called "Translations" (and vols. 45 & 46 of the entire set). The page size is 3 1/2 by 5 1/2 inches (24^{mo}). The books are bound in full calf, of tan color, with tooling in gold on the spine and around the edges of the covers. Both volumes have HWL's bookplate inside the front cover. Many marks and a few notations, presumably all by HWL, are written with pencil in these two books: some words are underlined; some misprints are corrected; some lines and passages are marked with vertical lines or brackets or checkmarks in the margin; some page numbers are written on a flyleaf; and the divisions of *Paradise* are written (clearly in HWL's hand) on the back of the sub-title page for the third cantica.

32. *Dante, translated by Ichabod Charles Wright, M. A.* (Vol. I, *The Inferno*; Vol. II, *The Purgatorio*; Vol. III, *The Paradiso*). A new edition, revised and corrected. 3 v. London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1845. [LONG 1671–1673]

Paperbound. Each volume is inscribed on the front cover: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1851" (or 1857? The last digit is not clear [almost surely 1851]).

33. *Dante's Divina Commedia, translated into English, in the metre and triple rhyme of the original, with notes, by Mrs. Ramsay*. 3 v. London: Tinsley Brothers, 1862–1863. [LONG 1594–1596]

Vols. I and II, 1862; vol. III, 1863. Inscribed on the front flyleaf of vol. I: "H. W. Longfellow from the translator, Claudia H. Ramsay; in testimony of very high esteem & admiration." HWL's bookplate is inside the front cover of each volume. {Full vellum; 16^{mo}.}

34. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, translated in terza rima by John Dayman, M. A.* London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1865. [LONG 1661]

Inscribed on the short-title page: "To Henry Wadsworth Longfellow with the best respects of the Translator. Shelton Rectory, Penwith, May 5th 1866." {Full cloth; 8°.}

35. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, translated into English verse by I. C. Wright, M. A., illustrated with [thirty-four] engravings on steel, after designs by Flaxman.* Fifth edition. London: Bell & Daldy, 1867. [LONG 8815]

In Bohn's Library. [Also includes title page, facing frontispiece engraving and preface from the third edition published in London by Henry G. Bohn, 1854. Pages uncut.]

36. *The Divina commedia of Dante, translated into English verse by James Ford, A. M.* London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1870. [LONG 1616]

On the verso of the front flyleaf is an inscription by the translator to his son-in-law, Thomas Hughes, dated 1870. On the short-title page is another by James Russell Lowell: "Left by T. H. with J. R. L., & by him / confiscated & presented to the author / of the best translation of the D. C. / Che tra l'ultima notte e'l primo die / O per uno o per altro fu o fie (fatta.)" {Full cloth; 12^{mo}.}

37. *The Vision; or Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, by Dante Alighieri, translated by . . . Henry Francis Cary . . . and illustrated with the designs of M. Gustave Doré.* New edition, with critical and explanatory notes, life of Dante, and chronology. 2 v. London, Paris, and New York: Cassel, Petter, and Galpin, [ca. 1872–1875]. [LONG 3113–3114]

Folio size. HWL's bookplate is in both volumes. {Full cloth.}

38. *The Inferno of Dante Alighieri, translated in the terza rima of the original, with notes and appendix, by John Dayman, M. A.* London: William Edward Painter, 1843. [LONG 1614]

On a flyleaf, in HWL's hand: "Henry W. Longfellow." {Full Cloth; 8°.}

39. *Dante's Divine Comedy: The Inferno, a literal prose translation, with the text of the original collated from the best editions, and explanatory notes, by John A. Carlyle, M. D.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1849. [LONG 1602]

Inscription on flyleaf: "To H. W. Longfellow. / By direction of / Dr. J. A. Carlyle—/ R. W. Emerson / June 26, 1849." On Sept. 24 HWL wrote to Emerson that he had read the book with great care.

40. *Dante's Divine Comedy: The Inferno . . .* by John A. Carlyle, M.D. London: Chapman and Hall, 1849. [LONG 1713]

Another copy [from the London edition]. Inscribed on the short-title page by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1849."

41. *Dante's Divine Comedy, the first part, Hell, translated in the metre of the original, with notes*, by Thomas Brooksbank, M. A. Camb. London: John W. Parker and Son, 1854. [LONG 1593]

Description on flyleaf: "H. W. Longfellow, Esquire. / Newport, 20th August 1855." Brooksbank visited HWL on August 19 and 20, and gave him the book on the 20th (HWL's Journal). {Full cloth; 12^{mo}.}

42. *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri, part I: The Hell, translated into blank verse* by William Michael Rossetti, with introduction and notes. London and Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1865. [LONG 1585]

Inscription (by James T. Fields?) on flyleaf: "H. W. L. / from J. T. F. / May. 1865."

43. *The First Ten Cantos of the Inferno of Dante Alighieri, newly translated into English verse* [by Thomas William Parsons]. Boston: William D. Ticknor, 1843. [LONG 1720]

Bound in brown cardboard. Inscribed on the outside of the front cover: "For / Henry W. Longfellow / with the respects / of Tho. W. Parsons"; on the short-title page, in HWL's hand: "Henry W. Longfellow."

44. *Seventeen Cantos of the Inferno of Dante Alighieri* [translated by Thomas William Parsons]. Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1865. [LONG 1715]

Inscribed on the short-title page: "To Henry W. Longfellow / with the love and best wishes of / his friend and servant / T. W. Parsons."

45. *The First Canticle, Inferno, of the Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, translated* by Thomas William Parsons. Boston: De Vries, Ibarra and Company, 1867. [LONG 1662]

With Doré's illustrations. Inscription on flyleaf: "To Henry W. Longfellow / with my sincere / love and esteem / T. W. Parsons / August—1867." {Full cloth; 8°.}

46. *The Ante-Purgatorio of Dante Alighieri, translated* by T. W. Parsons. Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1875. [LONG 1716]

Paperbound. Inscribed on front cover: "H. W. Longfellow, Esqr. / with the compliments of / the Translator."

47. *The Ante-Purgatorio of Dante Alighieri, translated* by T. W. Parsons. London: Hatchards, 1876. [LONG 1717]

Has HWL's bookplate inside the front cover. {Bound in ivory buckram.}

48. *The Paradiso of Dante*, translated by Ichabod Charles Wright, M.A. London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1840. [LONG 1712] Inscribed on flyleaf by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow." {Full cloth; 8°.}
49. *The New Life of Dante, an essay, with translation, by Charles Eliot Norton*. Cambridge [Mass.]: Riverside Press, 1859. [LONG 1607] Inscribed on flyleaf by CEN: "For Mrs. Longfellow / with the affectionate respects and / best wishes of / Charles Eliot Norton. / Christmas, 1859."
50. *The New Life of Dante Alighieri*, translated by Charles Eliot Norton. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1867. [LONG 1609] Inscribed on flyleaf by CEN: "H. W. Longfellow / with the affectionate regards / of / C. E. Norton. / Sept. 25, 1867." {Full cloth; quarto.}
51. *The Vita Nuova of Dante*, translated, with an introduction and notes, by Theodore Martin. London: Parker, Son, and Bourn, 1862. [LONG 1598] Inscribed on short-title page: "H W L from R. I. M. / Xmas, 1861." From Robert I. Mackintosh. {Full cloth; 12^{mo}.}
52. *The Canzoniere of Dante Alighieri, including the poems of the Vita Nuova and Convito, Italian and English, translated by Charles Lyell, Esq.* London: James Bohn, 1840. [LONG 1586] Inscribed on flyleaf by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow."
53. *The Lyrical Poems of Dante Alighieri, including the poems of the Vita Nuova and Convito, translated by Charles Lyell, A. M.* London: William Smith, 1845. [LONG 1714] Inscribed on flyleaf by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1850." {Full cloth; 16^{mo}.}

ii. Dutch

54. *De Komedie van Dante Alighieri, in dichtmaat overgebracht door Dr. J. C. Hacke Van Mijnden . . . 3 v.* Haarlem: A.C. Kruseman, 1867–1873. [LONG 3115–3117] {Large} folio size. Has a column of Italian and a column of Dutch in each page. Vol. I, *De Hel*, 1867, has bound in a letter of presentation from the translator dated 1 Nov. 1867 and written in English; vol. II, *Het Vagevuur*, 1870, has a letter laid in—this one in French, and dated at Amsterdam, May 1870; vol. III, *Het Paradijs*, 1873—published posthumously. HWL's bookplate is inside the front cover of vols. I and II. {Full cloth.}
55. *De Goddelijke Komedie, in nederlandsche terzinen vertaald, met verklaringen en geschiedkundige aantekeningen nopens den dichter, door Mr. Joan Bohl*.

(*La Divina Commedia. Recata in terze rime neerlandesi. Con spiegazioni e cenni storici intorno al poeta dal dr. Gio. Bohl*). Eerste Lied: *De Hel* (Haarlem: W. C. De Graaff, 1876); Tweede Lied: *Het Vagevuuer* (Amsterdam: Brinkman en Van de Meulen, 1880); Derde Lied: *Het Paradijs* (Amsterdam: Brinkman en Van de Meulen, 1884). [LONG 1688–1689]

Paperbound. Inscribed on the short-title page [of Vol. 1]: “Al chiarissimo Poeta Americano / Il Sig Henry Wadsworth Longfellow / coll’omaggio dal suo ammiratore / Giovanni Bohl. / Amsterdam / 17 di gennaio / 1881 [/ God sent his Singers upon the earth / With songs of sadness and of mirth; / That they might touch the hearts of men / And bring them back to heaven again.” (Longfellow, *The Singers*)]. [Inscribed on the short-title of Vol. 2: “All’Uomo egregio / Il Sig. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow / Illustre Traduttore di Dante / mando un fraterno saluto / Gio. Bohl. / Amsterdam, 19 Gennaio / 1881”, and below the title: “{Trust no Future, howe’er pleasant! / Let the dead Past bury its dead}, / Act—act in the living Present, / Heart within, and God o’erhead! {Longfellow, *A Psalm of Life*} / —/ Spero in Deo; non confundar”.] [Vol. 3 not present.]

iii. French

56. *La Divine comédie, traduite et précédée d’une introduction sur la vie, la doctrine et les oeuvres de Dante, oeuvres posthumes de F. Lamennais, publiées selon le vœu de l’auteur par E. D. Forgues*. 2 v. Paris: Didier et Cie, 1862. [LONG 1636–1637]

Half calf. Both volumes have HWL’s bookplate inside the front cover and this inscription on the front flyleaf, in HWL’s writing: “Henry W. Longfellow / 1862.” {Half calf; 8°.}

57. *La Vie nouvelle and Chansons*.—See Delécluze, item No. 72.

iv. German

58. *Dante Allighieri’s Göttliche Komödie, uebersetzt von Karl Witte*. Third edition. 2 v. Erster Band, German text; zweiter Band, Erläuterungen. Berlin: Ridolfo Decker, 1876. [LONG 1641–1642]

{Red cloth.} HWL’s bookplate is inside the front cover of each volume and a letter from Karl Witte is laid in the first volume:

Hochverehrter Herr!
Halle a/S 1876. Juli 28.

Ich habe durch herrn Westermann in New-York ein Exemplar der neuen Ausgabe meiner verdeutschten *Göttlichen Komödie* an Sie abgehn lassen. Es ist nicht ohne eine gewisse Scheu geschehn; denn es gehört einige Dreistigkeit dazu, dem Urheber eines Werkes wie Ihre Dante-Uebersetzung ist, eine verwandte Arbeit zu bieten. Es war mir indess ein Bedürfniss meinen Dank und meine innige verehrung durch ein Zeichen auszudrücken, undso wollen Sie dasselbe, seiner Unvollkommenheit, freundlich und mit Nachsicht aufnehmen.—Da Sie, wie ich zu meiner lebhaften Freude wahrgenommen habe, der ersten Ausgabe Ihre Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt, so wird Ihnen nicht entgehn, dass ich mich nach Kräften bemüht habe, jetzt besseres zu bieten. Ist mir das einigermaßen gelungen, soverdanke ich es zu einem nicht geringen Theile Ihnen, da Ihre uebersetzung stets neben mir lag und fortwährend befragtwurde.

Schmerzlich muss ich bedauern, dass die Freude, Sie von Angesicht zu Angesicht zu sehn mir vor sechs Jahren bei Ihrem besuche in Deutschland nicht zu Theil geworden ist. Mein Sohn, der vor drei Jahren Sie in Cambridge besuchen durfte, und voll der günstigsten Eindrücke von America heimkehrte, hätte mich am liebsten beredet, auch an meinem Theil die "Neue Welt" kennen zu lernen; in meinen Jahren schiff man aber nicht mehr über den Atlantischen Ocean: wenigstens nicht leiblich. Denn in gedanken thue ich es oft genug, und das Ziel meiner Schifffahrt ist alsdann mit Vorliebe Ihr haus und das des herrn Eliot Norton.

Verehrungsvoll

Irh

Ergebner

Karl Witte

II. Works on Dante

A. Books

59. Mazzoni, Jacopo. *Della difesa della Comedia di Dante, distinta in sette libri nella quale si risponde alle opposizioni fatte [da B. Bulgarini] al discorso di m. Iacopo Mazzoni, e si tratta pienamente dell'arte poetica, e di molt'altre cose pertinenti alla philosophia, & alle belle lettere, parte prima, che contiene li primi tre libri.* Cesena: Bartolomeo Rauerij, 1587. [LONG 1603]

Inscription on flyleaf: "To Professor Longfellow from Fitzedward Hall, India Office, London, Jan., 1868." {Full calf; 8°.}

60. Boccaccio, Giovanni, *Vita di Dante Alighieri*. Parma: Co' caratteri de' fratelli Amoretti, 1801. [LONG 1606]

HWL's bookplate inside the front cover. {Full calf.}

61. Flaxman, John, *Compositions from the Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise of Dante Alighieri, engraved by Thomas Piroli, from the drawings in possession of Thomas Hope Esqr. 1793*. London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, & Orme, Paternoster Row, R. H. Evans, Pall Mall, W. Miller, Albemarle Street, & I. & A. Arch, Cornhill, May 1. 1807. [LONG 1731]

Inscribed on flyleaf by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow." {Full Cloth; oblong quarto.}

62. Cancellieri, Francesco, *Osservazioni intorno alla questione promossa dal Vannozzi dal Mazzocchi dal Bottari specialmente dal p. abate D. Giuseppe di Costanzo sopra l'originalità della Divina commedia di Dante appoggiata alla storia della visione del monaco casinese Alberico ora per la prima volta pubblicata e tradotta dal latino in italiano*. Rome: F. Bourlie, 1814. [LONG 1600]

Inscribed inside the front cover by HWL: "Bought at the sale of Mr. Prescott's Library, Oct. 24, 1871" [pencilled annotation, probably the lot number from the sale: "266"] and on the front flyleaf: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1871."

63. Pelli, Giuseppe, *Memorie per servire alla vita di Dante Alighieri ed alla storia della sua famiglia . . . Seconda edizione*. Florence: Guglielmo Piatti, 1823. [LONG 1663]

Has HWL's bookplate inside the front cover [with pencilled bookseller or auction sale annotation beneath the bookplate: "300"]. {Half morocco [binding matches #2 (LONG 1649–1657)]; 8°.}

64. Compagni, Dino, *Cronaca fiorentina di messer Dino Compagni dal mclxxx al mcccxi*. Livorno: Dai torchi di Glauco Masi, 1830. [LONG 1687]

Inscribed on flyleaf by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow." He read Compagni's work (not necessarily for the first time) in the summer of 1870 (according to his Journal for August, 1870).

65. Boccaccio, Giovanni, *Il Comento sopra la Commedia di Dante Alighieri nuovamente corretto sopra un testo a penna and La Vita di Dante Alighieri di Giovanni Boccaccio ora nuovamente emendata*. 1 v. Florence: Per Ignace Moutier, impresso con i torchi della Stamperia Magheri, 1831. [LONG 1723]

Full calf binding {spine piece missing}. Contains vols. X, XI, XII, and XV of Boccaccio's *Opere Volgare*, edizione prima, Firenze, 1831, bound together. Includes the *Comento* [vols. 10–12] and the *Vita di Dante* [vol. 15].

66. Villani, Giovanni, *Cronica, a miglior lezione ridotta coll'ajuto de' testi a penna*. 8 v. Florence: Celli e Ronchi, Gaspero Ricci, 1832. [LONG 1680] Inscription by HWL on flyleaf of vol. 2: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1869."

67. Missirini, Melchior, *Vita di Dante Alighieri, dettata da Melchior Missirini, adorna di 50 vignette disegnate ed incise in legno da D. Fabris*. Florence: Fabris, 1840. [LONG 1605]

Inscription on flyleaf in HWL's hand: "Henry W. Longfellow / Naples. 1869." {Leather back; 8°.}

68. Montor, Alexis François Artaud de, *Histoire de Dante Alighieri par m. le chevalier Artaud de Montor*. Paris: Adrien Le Clère et C^{ie}, 1841. [LONG 1640]

Inside the front cover there are HWL's bookplate and an inscription: "To the eminent / translator of Dante / M. H. Longfellow. / his grateful reader / X[avier] Marmier / Paris 23 8h / 1868." {Half calf; 8°.}

69. [Winkler, Carl Gottfried Theodor], *Il Viaggio in Italia di Teodoro Hell, sulle orme di Dante per la prima volta pubblicato in italiano con note*. Treviso: G. A. Molena, 1841. [LONG 1622]

A translation into Italian [by Filippo Scolari] of Winkler's German version (Dresden, 1840) of [Jean Jacques] Ampère's *Voyage dantesque* ([Paris], 1839). Inside the front cover is HWL's bookplate. On the title page HWL wrote: "Theodor Hell is the pseudonym of Karl G. T. Winkler." On the front flyleaf HWL copied a quotation from the preface (p. iii) of Ampère's *La Grèce, Rome et Dante*, which includes the *Voyage*. . . . In his Journal, in Sept. 1851, Mr. Longfellow mentioned Ampère's "Wanderings in the footsteps of Dante."

70. Wright, Thomas, *St. Patrick's Purgatory, an essay on the legends of purgatory, hell, and paradise, current during the middle ages*. London: John Russel Smith, 1844. [LONG 1644]

Inscription by HWL on verso of flyleaf: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1846."

71. Tosti, D. Luigi, *Storia di Bonifazio VIII e de' suoi tempi*. 2 v. Monte Cassino: Pe' tipi di Monte Cassino, 1846. [LONG 1693–1694]

Inscription on front cover of vol. I: "Henry W. Longfellow / Naples. March 10, 1869." Only HWL's name is written on the cover of vol. II.

72. Delécluze, Etienne Jean, *Dante Alighieri, ou la poésie amoureuse*. 2 v. Paris: Amyot, [ca. 1848]. [LONG 1634–1635]

HWL's bookplate inside the front cover. The work contains a translation of the *Vita nuova* and of some canzoni. {Full calf, bound by Redford; 12°.}

73. Balbo, Cesare, Count, *The Life and Times of Dante Alighieri, translated from the Italian by F. J. Bunbury*. 2 v. London: Richard Bentley, 1852. [LONG 1664–1665]

Inscription on front flyleaf of each volume, by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1854." {Full cloth; 8°.}

74. Cayley, Charles Bagot, *Dante's Divine Comedy, notes on the translation by C. B. Cayley*. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855. [LONG 1592]

Inscription on flyleaf, by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1857." The fourth volume of a set, and contains notes only. The 3 vols. of the translation (1851–1854) are not among HWL's books. {Full cloth; 12°.}

75. Gigli, Ottavio, editor, *Studi sulla Divina commedia di Galileo Galilei, Vincenzo Borghini ed altri*. Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1855. [LONG 1599]

Inscribed inside the front cover: "Duplicate C. E. N." = Charles Eliot Norton; and on flyleaf, in HWL's writing: "H.W.L. from C.E.N. / 1863." {Full cloth; 12°.}

76. Ampère, Jean-Jacques, *La Grèce, Rome et Dante, études littéraires d'après nature*. Nouvelle édition revisée et corrigée. Paris: Didier et Cie, 1859. [LONG 1615]

HWL's bookplate inside the front cover. {Full calf 8°.}

77. De' Nerli, Filippo, *Commentarij dei fatti civili occorsi dentro la città di Firenze dall'anno 1215 al 1537 scritti dal senatore Filippo de' Nerli*. 2 v. Trieste: Colombo Coen, 1859. [LONG 1779–1780]

Paperbound. Inscribed on front cover by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow."

78. Blanc, Ludwig Gottfried, *Versuch einer bloss philologischen Erklärung mehrerer dunklen und streitigen Stellen der Göttlichen Komödie*. Vol. I, *Die Hölle*, 1. Heft, Gesang I–XVII (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1860); 2. Heft, Gesang XVIII–XXXIV (1861); vol. II, *Das Fegefeuer*, Gesang I–XXVII (Halle, 1865). [LONG 1698–1700]

Paperbound in 3 volumes. Vol. I inscribed on front cover by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1864"; vol. II, "Henry W. Longfellow." The latter booklet was received in Jan. 1866 (HWL's Journal).

79. Botta, Vincenzo, *Dante as Philosopher, Patriot, and Poet, with an analysis of the Divina Commedia, its plot and episodes*. New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1865. [LONG 1628]

A note on the title page written by H.W.L. Dana states that "Mr. Parkman Howe's copy of this book is inscribed: "George W. Greene / From H.W.L. / Camb. Nov. 27, 1865." In August 1865, in a letter, HWL asked J. T. Fields to get him Botta's book on Dante. {Full cloth; 8°.}

80. *Esposizione dantesca in Firenze, maggio mdccclxv*. Cataloghi: I, *Codici e documenti*; II, *Edizioni*; III, *Oggetti d'arte*. Florence: Tipografia dei successori Le Monnier, 1865. [LONG 1744]

81. Mignaty, Marguerite Albany, *An Historical Sketch Illustrative of the Life and Times of Dante Alighieri, with an outline of the legendary history of hell, purgatory, and paradise previous to the Divina Commedia*. Florence: A. Bettini, 1865. [LONG 1773]

Paperbound. Inscribed on the front cover: "Henry W. Longfellow"; on the short-title page: "To Henry Wadsworth Longfellow / In token of respectful admiration / and true regard, / Margaret Mignaty."

82. Norton, Charles Eliot, *On the Original Portraits of Dante*. Cambridge, Mass.: University Press, 1865. [LONG 1608]

A booklet of 18 pages. Inscribed on flyleaf: "H.W. Longfellow / with the affectionate regards of / C. E. Norton. May 1865." {Fifty copies printed, [with four photographic illustrations].}

83. Perez, Francesco Paolo, *La Beatrice svelata, preparazione all'intelligenza di tutte le opere di Dante Alighieri*. Palermo: Francesco Lao, 1865. [LONG 1774]

Paperbound. Inscribed on front cover: "Al sommo poeta Longfellow che degnamente rivela le segrete bellezze di Dante al nuovo e libero mondo. L'Autore."

84. Perez, Paolo, *I Sette cerchi del Purgatorio di Dante*. Seconda edizione ritoccata e accresciuta dall'autore. Verona: Libreria alla Minerva, 1867. [LONG 1690]

HWL's bookplate is inside the front cover.

85. Genelli, Buonaventura, *Umriss zu Dantes Göttlichen Komödie, unter Leitung des Künstlers gestochen von H. Schütz, neue Ausgabe mit erläuterndem Text in deutscher, italienischer und französischer Sprache, herausgegeben von Dr. M. Jordan*. Leipzig: A. Dürr, 1867. [LONG 1734]

HWL's bookplate inside the front cover. {Boards; oblong quarto.}

86. *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Dante-Gesellschaft*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus; vol. I (1867), vol. II (1869), vol. III (1871), vol. IV (1877). [LONG 1645–1648]

Inscription on flyleaf of vol. I: “Herrn Henry Wadsworth Longfellow / dem allgefeierten Dichter, / dem trefflichen Uebersetzer und Erlaeuterer / der Divine Commedia / ehrerbietigt / von / Carl Witte.” HWL wrote his own name on the flyleaf of vol. III. {Full cloth; 8°.}

87. Gunning, Johannes Herman, *Dante Alighieri, a study, translated from the Dutch*. [LONG 1709–1710]

A manuscript copy in two volumes of a book published in Amsterdam in 1870 [Johannes Herman Gunning, *Dante Alighieri, eene studie*. Amsterdam: Höveker & Zoon 1870.]. {Cloth, loose covers.}

88. Rossetti, Maria Francesca, *A Shadow of Dante, being an essay towards studying himself, his world, and his pilgrimage*. London, Oxford, and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1871. [LONG 1597]

Inscription on flyleaf: “With Miss Rossetti’s Compliments.” HWL’s bookplate is inside the front cover. HWL mentioned this book favorably in a letter of June 19, 1872, to C. E. Norton.

89. Caetani, Michelangelo, duca di Sermoneta, *La Materia della Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri dichiarata in vi tavole*. Seconda edizione. Rome: Libreria Spithöver, 1872. [LONG 3119]

Of folio size. Inscription on flyleaf: “Al chiarissimo Professore H W Longfellow / Illustre Traduttore della Divina Commedia / il suo amico ed ammiratore / Michelangelo Caetani / Roma 1873.” {Paper.}

90. Scarabelli, Luciano, *Confronti critici istituiti alle illustrazioni figurative date alla Divina commedia dagli artisti Doré e Scaramuzza: Inferno*. Piacenza: Giuseppe Tedeschi, 1874. [LONG 1753]

Paperbound. {Faded purple paper cover.}

91. Poletto, Giacomo, *Amore e luce nella Divina commedia, ragionamento critico*. Padua: Tipografia del Seminario, 1876. [LONG 1777]

Paperbound. Inscription: “All’illustre Dantofilo / Enrico Wadsworth Longfellow / fa omaggio l’autore.” On the front cover: “Henry W. Longfellow.”

92. Witte, Karl, *Dante-Forschungen, Altes und Neues*. Zweiter Band. Heilbronn: Gebr. Henninger, 1879. [LONG 1778]

Paperbound. Inscribed on front cover: “Henry W. Longfellow / 1879.”

93. Caetani, Michelangelo, Duca di Sermoneta, *Tre chiose di Michaelangelo Caetani Duca di Sermoneta nella Divina commedia di Dante Allighieri*. Terza edizione. Rome: Coi i tipi del Salviucci, 1881. [LONG 1750]

Paperbound. Inscription on front cover: "H W Longfellow, Esq.r. / from the author, / by Robt. C. Winthrop."

94.—Another copy of the same work, inscribed on the front cover by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / 1881." [LONG 1749]

B. Offprints and Pamphlets

95. Missirini, Melchior, *Delle memorie di Dante in Firenze e della gratitudine de' fiorentini verso il divino poeta, commentario*. Florence: Tipografia all'insegna di Dante, 1830. [LONG 1692]

96. [Lowell, James Russell], A review of T. W. Parsons' *The First Ten Cantos of the Inferno, newly translated into English verse* (Boston: William D. Ticknor, 1843), in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, XIII, No. LXIV, Oct. 1843, 441–442. [LONG 14494]

[For Parsons' translation, see #43 above.]

97. S[chaff], P[hilip], "The Life and Genius of Dante," in *The American Review: A Whig Journal*, n.s. no. VIII; whole number XLIV (Aug. 1848), pp. 125–141. [LONG 1752]

98. Aroux, Eugène, *L'Hérésie de Dante démontrée par Francesca de Rimini, devenue un moyen de propagande vaudoise, et coup d'oeil sur les romans du Saint-Graal, notamment sur le Tristan de Léonnois, note lue à l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres dans la séance du 24 avril 1857, with Preuves de l'hérésie de Dante, notamment au sujet d'une fusion opérée vers 1312 entre la massenie albigeoise, le Temple et les Gibelins . . .* Paris: Veuve Jules Renouard, 1857. [LONG 1769]

{37 pp.; *Preuves*, 22 pp.; yellow paper cover.}

99. Barlow, Henry Clark, *Letteratura dantesca: remarks on the reading of the 114th verse of the viiith canto of the Paradise of the Divina Commedia*. London: G. Nichols, 1857. [LONG 1762]

{23 pp.}

100. Castiglia, Benedetto, *Dante Alighieri ou le problème de l'humanité au moyen âge, lettres à m. de Lamartine*. Paris: Dentu, 1857. [LONG 1756]

Inscription on front cover, by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow / From W.S.A. / 1865." W. S. A. was William Sumner Appleton. {Paper.}

101. Barlow, Henry Clark, *Francesca da Rimini, her lament, and vindication, with a brief notice of the Malatesti*. London: David Nutt, 1859. [LONG 1758]

Inscribed on title page: "Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Esq.r / with the Author's regards."

102. Norton, Charles Eliot, *A Review of Translation into Italian [by G. Tamburini] of the Commentary by Benvenuto da Imola on the Divina Commedia*. Cambridge, Mass: Printed by H. O. Houghton, 1861. [LONG 1697] Inscribed on front cover by HWL: "Henry W. Longfellow." {50 copies printed.}

103. [Hutton, Henry Dix], *Sinossi della Divina commedia di Dante*. [Dublin, 1861]. [★]

In outline, chart form. Inscribed: "Henry Dix Hutton / Dublin, August, 1861."

104. Barlow, Henry Clark, *Il Conte Ugolino e l'arcivescovo Ruggieri: a sketch from the Pisan Chronicles*. London: Trübner & Co., 1862. [LONG 1760] Inscribed on title page: "H W Longfellow Esq.r / with the Author's regards."

105. Barlow, Henry Clark, *Il Gran rifiuto: what it was, who made it, and how fatal to Dante Allighieri, a dissertation on verses fifty-eight to sixty-three of the third canto of the Inferno*. London: Trübner & Co., 1862. [LONG 1758] Inscribed on title page: "H. W. Longfellow Esq.r / with the Author's regards."

106. Barlow, Henry Clark, *The Young King and Bertran de Born*. London: Trübner & Co., 1862. [LONG 1763]

107. Giuliani, Giambattista, *Ritrovate ossa di Dante Allighieri nel compimento del primo festivo centenario . . . di Dante Allighieri*. Firenze, n.p., 1865. [★]

[This item was not located and it is unclear whether's Mathews bibliographical description above corresponds to a duplicate of #109 below or a variant printing thereof, as possibly recorded in Theodore Wesley Koch, ed., *Catalogue of the Dante collection presented by Willard Fiske*, 2 v. (Ithaca: New York, 1898–1900), 1: 256, n. 43. A related item, not described by Mathews, is found in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers (LONG 27930), box 4, folder 68: Primo Uccellini, *Relazione storica sulla avventurosa scoperta delle ossa di Dante Alighieri*. Ravenna: Stabilimento tip. di G. Angeletti, 1865. Inscribed on front cover in HWL's hand: "Le Ossa di Dante."]

108. Giuliani, Giambattista, *Nel solenne scoprimento della statua consacrata in Firenze a Dante Allighieri il 14 Maggio 1865, sesto e primo festivo centenario della sua nascita, discorso d'inaugurazione recitato nella piazza di Santa Croce*. Florence: Tipografia dei Successori Le Monnier, 1865. [LONG 1766]

109. Giuliani, Giambattista, *Nella solenne deposizione delle ritrovate ossa di Dante nell'antico loro sepolcro, discorso recitato in Ravenna il 26 di giugno 1865*. Florence: Tip. dei Successori Le Monnier, 1865. [LONG 1765]

110. Giuliani, Giambattista, *Nel compimento del primo festivo centenario della nascita di Dante Allighieri, discorso recitato in Dresda il 15 settembre 1865, dinanzi alla Società dei Dantisti Alemanni*. Florence: Tip. dei Successori Le Monnier, 1865 [LONG 1764]

111. Schier, Karl Heinrich, *Ciel et enfer, ou, Description du globe céleste arabe qui est conservé au Musée Mathématique Royal de Dresde (en latin et en allemand) suivie d'un supplément des commentaires sur la Divine comédie de Dante Alighieri*. Dresden and Leipzig: B. G. Tübner, 1866. [LONG 1695]

112. Bartolini, Agostino, *Dante e l'evangelica predicazione del sacerdote Agostino Bartolini*. Florence: Tipografia all'Insegna di San Antonino, 1868. [LONG 1754]

[Verso of title page reads: "Estratto dal periodico *Archivio dell'Ecclesiastico* vol. IX, pag. 36 e segg."]

113. Giuliani, Giambattista, "Dante spiegato con Dante: il canto del conte Ugolino nuovamente commentato," from the *Rivista Urbinate*, July, 1868. [LONG 1767]

{40 pp.; purple paper cover.}

114. Maschio, Antonio, *Pensieri sulla Divina commedia e il trionfo di Francesca da Rimini, interpretazioni*. Venice: P. Naratovich, 1871. [LONG 1757]

Inscribed on title page by a Mrs. Little to G. W. Greene, then given by GWG to HWL, and inscribed on the front cover by the latter: "Henry W. Longfellow / from G.W.G." {Paper.}

115. Hale, Edward E., "The Cosmogony of Dante and Columbus," from *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, No. 58 (April 23, 1872), 83–85. [loosely inserted in front cover of LONG 1702]

The off-print is in a blank cover, on which HWL wrote the title of the article, name of the author, and year. At the top of the first page HWL wrote the name of the periodical and the precise date.

116. Parsons, Thomas William, *Versi sopra un busto di Dante, tradotti dall'inglese dal Generale Masi*. Palermo: Lao, 1872. [LONG 1755]

Inscribed on title page: "H. W. Longfellow Esq.re / with kind regards of / Luigi Monti / Palermo March 9th 1872."

117. Preger, Wilhelm, *Dante's Matelda, ein akademischer Vortrag*. Munich: Verlag der k. Akademie, 1873. [LONG 1768]

{58 pp.; blue paper cover.}

118. Vinton, Frederic, "St. Patrick's Purgatory, and the Inferno of Dante," from *The Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Ecdectic*, edited by Edwards A. Park and George E. Day (Andover, Mass.; Warren F. Draper;

New Haven: Judd and White; London: Trübner and Company, 1873), vol. 30, no. 118, pp. 275–286. [bound in back of LONG 1755]

119. Giuliani, Giambattista, *Dante spiegato con Dante, metodo di commentare la Divina commedia dedotto dall'epistola di Dante a Cangrande della Scala*. Turin: G. Speirani e Figli., 1881. [LONG 1748]

Inscription on flyleaf: "All'insigne E. Longfellow / per altissima stima e coi più lieti auguri / affettuosamente GBG." {36 pp.; tan paper cover.}

Appendix: Miscellaneous Items

120. Several little fragments of wood from Dante's coffin. [LONG 17243]

The four largest pieces vary from about 3/4 inch to about 1 1/2 inches in length, and there are a few smaller fragments. They are enclosed in a tiny case which has a glass front, and on the back of the case, in HWL's hand, is written: "Fragments of the coffin of Dante. From Mrs. (or Mr.?) T. B. Lawrence, 1872." (Cf. Samuel Longfellow's *Life of H. W. L.*, III, 204 [Colonel T. Bigelow Lawrence was United States Consul General in Italy]). [See also other documents related to the gift from Bigelow's widow, Elizabeth, in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Papers (LONG 27930), box 1, folder 35, and box 4, folder 68; see also correspondence of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana in box 4, folder 25.]

121. Two Dante medals. [LONG 17237–17238]

a) A silver, or silver-colored, medal about 2 inches in diameter and 3/16 inch thick. On the obverse side there is imaged a bust of Dante, in profile (the design resembles that of the Naples bust). Around the bust, near the upper rim of the medal, on the left and right sides respectively, are the two words "DANTE ALIGHIERI," in large capitals; and near the bottom rim, in small capitals, the words "Prof. G. Duprè Dir. L. Gori Inc." On the reverse side there is a circular border formed by a laurel wreath, and the central space is filled with the following words, all in capital letters: "Nel / sesto centenario / del suo gran figlio / Firenze / priva dell'ossa di lui / si riconforta / nella diletta / effigie." This medal is in a little box, on the front (or top) cover of which is pictured a little central design showing the two faces of the medal; near the upper rim are the words "I Fratelli Gori" and near the bottom rim, "Maggio 1865 Firenze."

b) A bronze, or bronze-colored, medal, about 2 1/4 inches in diameter and 3/16 inch thick. On the obverse side is imaged a bust of Dante, in

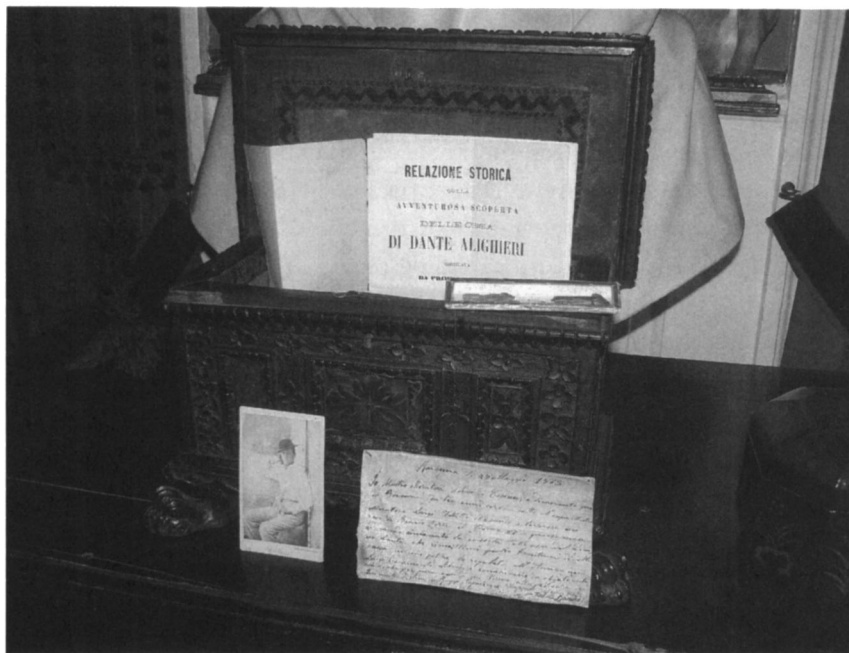


Fig. 1: Fragments of wood from Dante's coffin, which Longfellow kept in a carved wooden casket with a copy of an Italian account of the discovery and transfer of the poet's remains to Ravenna

profile. Near the upper rim, on the left and right sides respectively, are the two words "DANTE ALIGHIERI," in large capital letters. Directly beneath the bust, in small capitals, "Enr. Pazzi Mod." and near the bottom rim, "Raf. Sernesi Inc. Nell'officina Mariotti." On the reverse side there is a circular border formed by a laurel wreath, and in the central space are the words, all in capitals, "Al Divino Poeta / L'Italia / nel Maggio MDCCCLXV / Municipio Fiorentino." This medal is in a little leather case, written inside of which, in HWL's hand, are the words "presented to Henry W. Longfellow by the City of Florence 1865."

122. A little statue of Dante. [LONG 4639]

It is of the entire body, in a standing position, and about 24 inches high; and it is situated on a bracket, above a mirror, high on the east wall of the study in the Longfellow House. HWL mentioned it in a letter to G. W. Greene, Jan. 13, 1864. In his Journal, on Oct. 1, 1846, he mentioned seeing "a beautiful cast of Dante, full-length figure, about two feet high" at Sam Eliot's in Brookline.

123. A small picture of Dante. [LONG 4768]

A copy, about 6 by 14 inches, of Raphael's sepia sketch, in the Albertina Library, Vienna. Of almost the entire body, in profile, and showing the signature at the bottom: "*R. Urbino." Framed and hanging on a wall in a small passageway between the study and the library.

124. A fairly large picture of Dante. [LONG 4767]

Of just the head and upper part of the body; about 21 by 28 inches, including the margins. It is, according to the information printed in the bottom border of the picture, a "Fac-simile of a Portrait by Giotto discovered in 1841 in the Bargello at Florence / from a tracing by Seymour Kirkup Esq made previously to the restoration of the fresco / and now the property of the Rt Honble Lord Vernon. / Vincent Brooks, Cromolith / Arundel Society, 24 Old Bond Street." Reproduced by the Arundel Society in 1859. Framed and hanging on a wall of the main hall upstairs.

125. Another picture of the Giotto portrait, with the damaged eye restored. [LONG 4806]

This copy is about 16 by 22 inches, and shows other faces in the background. This picture, or a similar one (see No. 126c below), showing Dante's head and other heads in the background, was sent to HWL before May 10, 1866, by Mrs. Francis Alexander from Florence. On that date HWL wrote to her, "The heads from the Bargello are very interesting. I had before only Dante's without Giotto's and the others that are fading into air in the background. Many thanks for this kind remembrance."

126. Several other items kept in a folder. [LONG 1711]

a) Another copy of the Raphael drawing, on thin paper, and about 3 by 8 inches.

b) Another, small picture of the Giotto portrait before it was restored.

c) Another picture, about 6 by 8 inches, of the Giotto portrait after it was restored.

d) A pencil tracing of the head of Dante (the Giotto Portrait) made by Mr. Kirkup. This tracing is about 8 by 12 inches, and is inscribed: "Traced by Seymour Kirkup on a tracing made by him before the fresco was repainted. Flor. 18 9." The date is not entirely legible.

e) A printed copy of Ary Scheffer's "Dante and Beatrice." About 5 by 12 inches. HWL mentioned this work of Scheffer's in his Journal on Jan, 13, 1855.

f) A picture of the "Busto in bronzo di Dante Alighieri. M. di Napoli. Ricavato dalla maschera fatta sul cadavere." This picture is on thin paper, and about 6 by 10 inches.

- g) A small picture of the statue of Dante erected in 1865 in Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. The picture is about 4 by 6 inches.
- h) Four photographs giving different views of the so-called death mask of Dante. These are about 4 1/4 by 5 1/2 inches, and were given to HWL by C. E. Norton, on Dec. 24. 1860 (letter of CEN to HWL).

Illustration

1. Photograph by David Daly, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historical Site. Courtesy National Park Service.

NOTE

1. J[oseph] Chesley Mathews, "Longfellow's Dante Collection," *ESQ (Emerson Society Quarterly): A Journal of the American Renaissance*, no. 62 (Winter 1971): 10–22.

A Dante Club Reunion: A Short Story

MATTHEW PEARL

He called on him on Wednesday. A few hours earlier than they would have gathered years ago, but Wednesday was the gesture. It almost felt like 1865 again. Except the weather outside was so stifling. That was wrong. Back then, they'd have their meetings in the fall and the winter, with snow drifts on the walkways, and by the summer would be away to the mountains or the sea, far from town. Things had changed, their lives contracted, Cambridge expanded. Even summertime seemed hotter than one could remember it being in 1865.

Ringling: the door bell an echo of more changes. He would have been waiting for the gathering at the open door in '65. Instead, a housemaid opened the door and led the guest inside with her face inclined downward to the carpet. Through the front hall, into the study. There he sat in his deep armchair, legs long and outstretched.

"Norton, a happy surprise," he said, pushing himself to his feet with a slow grace. "I have not seen you half enough."

"No, my dear Longfellow! No need to stand. Many apologies for not sending word ahead. I knew . . ." Charles Eliot Norton said, pausing. "I'd hoped you would be home for a visit. Me, a seer all of the sudden."

Longfellow was home most of the time these days. Almost always. How could that not remind his closest friends of another time so long ago? Long ago but fresh in all his friends' and neighbors' minds. The funeral inside this peaceful yellow house. Close to the room where she'd been when it happened. The widower and father of five could not stir for days. Would not step outside except into the garden, even once he physically might manage going into town or for a walk by the river. He had aged so much with grief before their eyes back then that it was surprising

to find their friend had aged in actuality now. One foreign visitor recently had called him the White Mr. Longfellow.

"I've come on business of sorts. I've come with a request," Norton said with a quick smile, careful not to appear to be studying his friend. Longfellow would shrink at concern. Norton did have a legitimate request, after all.

Longfellow folded his hands together. "Please, my dear friend. You know I'd do whatever I can for you."

"It is not a request for me."

"Well, *les amis de mes amis sont mes amis*."

"Thank you. There are some at the college, Mr. Sheldon and others, who wish to form a society for the study and promotion of Dante. They believe they could have as many as thirty members to begin it."

"Dante," Longfellow repeated. There was a glimmer in his light-colored eyes, and then a stately nod that drove it back. "A society," he said, the word seeming to cause trouble to him.

"To promote the study and knowledge of Dante in the United States."

"Dante does not please easily," Longfellow pointed out.

"I should think he would have agreed. Dante, I mean. And, I have had not a few students in my Dante class tell me the same!"

"Dante, an obscure writer of the fourteenth century, in a curious book, so tragic that he calls it a Comedy. So thought Harvard boys. It was a struggle to even find three or four students when I first taught the class you now preside over," Longfellow said. "Even you were skeptical when you stepped into my classroom."

"We were the first students," Norton said admiringly. "You were the first teacher. You shared your passion for Dante with them, as you did with me. You taught not just to read Dante, but how to be Virgil to others."

"A society," Longfellow said again, shaking his head, "would be a formal and ambitious thing. But I suppose it is a good thing to hear about."

"My dear Longfellow, their wish is something far more than for me to tell you about it. They wish your involvement."

"Me? It will give me great pleasure to promise to come to any meeting, with the understanding that you do not expect me to keep my promise." Longfellow smiled absently.

"It was your translation that first brought Dante to the readers in America, after all."

"The best thing that can be said of the translation, perhaps, is that it will be a help to the study of the original. You should say *our* translation, you know, Norton. Without our little Dante Club, I'd not have finished it. I thank you heartily for that aid and sympathy."

"It was our honor."

The exchange seemed to mandate a pause. Because it had been a club that did so much more than help a fellow writer finish a project. It had helped a man finish a personal pilgrimage of pain. Hadn't it? Sometimes it had seemed a rehabilitation, sometimes it had seemed a confrontation with the horrors. Of course, he could not have saved her, no matter what he would have done, no matter how quickly he'd acted. He rolled himself on top of her and the library carpet to put out the fire. It was simply too severe. Even a man with the inner strength of Longfellow could not will away the damage across her skin and bones. She would have died whether he had been there or not. But he had been there. He had tried to stop it, and that was searing.

Every Wednesday, however stormy or snowy, their little club would gather in this room and talk only of Dante. They would review one or two cantos per session that the poet had translated from Italian into English. Norton could remember Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes insisting to him that the meetings kept dear Longfellow easy throughout that time. The club permitted him to be a poet again. Of course, the club meetings had to end when the translation was finished. Nobody really wanted them to end. They had met at Norton's house, Shady Hill, to translate *La vita nuova*. Then one of them—but who? Was it Holmes? Now Norton could not remember and thought, maybe, it was Norton himself. One of the faithful members, in any case, suggested continuing the Dante Club meetings by reading the poem aloud again and again. Longfellow politely declined the idea.

Longfellow had been restored as a poet, somehow, as a man, a father. Yet the glow that Norton had seen in his friend those Wednesdays when they were with Dante had never fully returned.

"He is in England," Longfellow said flatly.

"What?"

"Lowell is in England. Why, what would a Dante Club be without him? He would sit there. He should come home. Well, the absent are

always in the wrong, says the French proverb. Greene is not well enough to come to town. That was his chair near the fire. Fields is gone. By the door. Howells is far too occupied—there he would remain, for the entire two hours. I do not know that Holmes, from the armchair, would relish a return to those topics.”

Norton nodded heavily. James Russell Lowell, poet who’d become diplomat, had been appointed American ambassador to England. James T. Fields, their publisher, had died, some years after his publishing firm, Ticknor & Fields, dissolved into a stew of other lesser names, Osgood-Houghton-Mifflin. Norton, who had been thirty-eight, along with William Dean Howells, who hadn’t even been thirty, had been the youngest members invited into the club in 1865.

How could Norton even pretend to tempt him with the specter of any true Dante Club reunion? What was really remaining from all the literary adventures they had and imagined having together at Dante’s side through the chiaroscuro terrains of the afterlife? What was really left of any of them? A little more, surely. Something more yet of the White Mr. Longfellow.

“Society,” Norton said. “It would be a society this time, not a club—something *better*, that would surely end the conversation in the blink of an eye. Not as though Longfellow would throw him down the steps of Craigie House, of course. Longfellow was not argumentative like Lowell, nor would he laugh away in puns and jokes something he didn’t want to discuss, as was the habit of Dr. Holmes. He would instead become silent. Peaceful but deathly silent. Maybe talk of trivial matters slightly related. A conversation partner would have to steer back immediately or be lost at sea. In his tranquility and passivity he could out-stubborn the most stubborn man in Cambridge.

“Pardon me, then, if building after thee
In the old granite of our English speech
And in a different age and different clime
Content to keep the form and symmetry
I leave reluctant, as beyond my reach,
The medieval ornaments of rhyme.”

Norton leaned back in his chair in surprise.

“I wrote that when I was translating Dante,” Longfellow explained of the recitation. “I wanted to explain why I chose to translate without the

terza rima of Dante. I never finished that sonnet, but you can follow my line of thought. In translating Dante, something always must be relinquished. Shall it be the beautiful rhyme that blossoms all along the line like a honeysuckle on the hedge? It must be, in order to retain something more precious than rhyme, namely, fidelity, truth—the life of the hedge itself.” The poet’s lips broke into a tentative smile. “I still remember, Norton! Imagine that. I can remember a sonnet I never finished fifteen-odd years ago. ‘The old granite of our English speech.’ How do you like that phrase? Do you favor it?”

Soliciting his opinion. This seemed like the moment. “They want you to be president, my dear Longfellow.”

“The future society, do you mean?”

“Indeed!”

This tactic had its risks. On the one hand, it was a sign of honor. On the other, Longfellow never enjoyed being the center of attention, a fact that always clashed with his enormous popularity from the time *Hiawatha* had invaded every living room in America. The poet rose to his feet slowly, with a fragile balance, and stood at the window for some air.

“Did you know, Norton, they sell Dante calendars to the public now?”

“This would be a serious society, my dear friend. Why is it I sound old whenever I say something is ‘serious’?”

“There are conversations that make us all suddenly old. Old men should not climb ladders, even in their libraries. I wonder, Norton. Would Dante be the president of a society were he here today? He was not a cooperative man.” Longfellow turned his gaze to the ivory statue of a stoic, laurel-crowned Dante near the top of the study shelves. “That sorrowful countenance, with the grief-stricken, mournful expression of an indomitable soul at war with fate. Dante always moved slowly, with decorum. I imagine, moreover, he did not feel at home in universities or assembly halls.”

“It has been suggested that the meetings are held here, at Craigie House,” Norton said, skipping a breath after he said it.

Longfellow turned back to his friend. His gaze now faced the standing desk where he’d presided over their club meetings. He raised his eyebrows in thought. It was Holmes who had called their meetings séances.

“If it would meet your approval,” Norton added with the excitement of a new idea, “it was thought Wednesdays might be convenient.”

Longfellow could not conceal the smile that opened under his heavy beard. His hands gripped the side of the desk lightly as if it were his pulpit.

“Tell me something, my dear Norton,” he said finally, “do you believe thirty would fit comfortably in this room?”

Author's note: The Dante Club was formed in 1865 to assist Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to finish his translation of the Divine Comedy, the first to be completed and published in the United States. The members included Charles Eliot Norton, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, James T. Fields, and George Washington Greene. In 1881 the club was resurrected as the more formal Dante Society, of which Longfellow served as the first president, a position inherited after Longfellow's death by Lowell and then by Norton. This short story imagines a fictional conversation between Longfellow and his onetime student Norton about the society's formation. Among other factual and historical details in the story, the incomplete sonnet Longfellow recites is published here, as far as I can tell, for the first time. It is included in a typewritten manuscript by H. W. L. Dana called ‘Longfellow and Dante’ kept at the archives of the Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

Contributors

Kelsey Abbruzzese is a 2007 graduate of Bowdoin College, where she spent part of her senior spring studying the connections between Longfellow and Dante at Bowdoin. She holds a masters of science in print journalism from Boston University and has written for the Associated Press, the *Boston Globe*, and the *MetroWest Daily News* in Framingham, Massachusetts.

Igor Candido holds a PhD in Italian Studies from the Johns Hopkins University (2011) and a Dottorato di ricerca in Italianistica from the University of Turin (2009). He specializes in Dante, Boccaccio, and medieval and Renaissance Italian literature. His essays and reviews have appeared in *MLN*, *Filologia e Critica*, *Studi sul Boccaccio*, and *Lettere Italiane*. His book on Ralph Waldo Emerson's interest in and knowledge of Dante is forthcoming and he is currently working on a book-project focusing on Boccaccio as reader, glossator, and imitator of Apuleius.

Wai Chee Dimock is William Lampson Professor of English and American Studies at Yale University. Her recent publications include *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*; a collaborative volume, *Shades of the Planet*; and a special issue of *PMLA*, "Remapping Genre" (October 2007). She is now at work on an anthology, *American Literature and the World*, and a nonacademic book, *Looking for the Grateful Dead*, in which Dante will figure. She is also a consultant for an educational series produced by WGBH, "Invitation to World Literature," and a frequent contributor to a related Facebook forum, "Rethinking World Literature."

Christian Y. Dupont received his PhD in theology from the University of Notre Dame in 1997 and his masters in information science from Indiana University in 1999. After serving as curator for special collections at Notre Dame from 1999–2002, he went on to become director of special

collections at Syracuse University (2003–2006) and the University of Virginia (2006–2008). As an independent scholar, he has lectured and published on the formation of the historic Dante collections at Notre Dame, Cornell, and Harvard. His essays have appeared in the *Harvard Library Bulletin*, *Studies in Bibliography*, and the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*.

Leslie E. Eckel is assistant professor of English at Suffolk University in Boston. She specializes in nineteenth-century American literature, with a particular focus on the cosmopolitan orientations and professional engagements of antebellum writers. Her essays and reviews have appeared in *Arizona Quarterly*, *ESQ*, *Resources for American Literary Study*, *The Comparatist*, and *Common-place*. She is completing a book entitled *At Work in the World: Nineteenth-Century American Authorship and Transatlantic Vocation*, from which her essay on Longfellow and Dante's worldly imaginations is drawn.

Christoph Irmischer is professor of English at Indiana University Bloomington and the author of several books, among them *Longfellow Redux* (2006) and *Public Poet, Private Man* (2009). He has edited *John James Audubon's Writings and Drawings* for the Library of America and has collaborated on and appeared in several documentaries, most recently Louisiana Public Television's *A Summer of Birds*. In 2009, the Web version of his Longfellow Bicentennial Exhibit at Houghton Library won the 2009 Katharine Kyes Leab and Daniel J. Leab Award for best electronic exhibition. His new book, *Mr. Agassiz's Puzzle-Box*, will be published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Giuseppe Mazzotta is Sterling Professor of Humanities for Italian at Yale University. He has written articles covering every century of Italian literary history. His books on Dante include *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy*, *The World at Play in Boccaccio's Decameron*, and *Dante's Vision and the Circle of Knowledge*, and he has also published books on Petrarch and on Giambattista Vico. His most recent is *Cosmopoiesis: The Renaissance Experiment*. He is a past president of Dante Society of America and has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Joan Nordell, independent scholar and former development officer in the Harvard Libraries and the Boston Athenaeum, became engaged with

Longfellow's private Dante when assisting Lutz S. Malke, the curator of an exhibition in 2000 at the *Kunstbibliothek* in Berlin, celebrating the 600th anniversary of the *Divine Comedy*.

Matthew Pearl, recipient of the Dante Prize from the Dante Society of America in 1998, is the author of the historical novel *The Dante Club* (2003). His other novels are *The Poe Shadow* (2006) and *The Last Dickens* (2009), all published by Random House. He is also the editor of three editions from Modern Library: Longfellow's translation of Dante's *Inferno* (2003), Edgar Allan Poe's *Dupin Tales* (2006) and Charles Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (2009). *The Dante Chamber*, a sequel to *The Dante Club*, is planned for 2013.

Patricia Roylance is assistant professor of English at Syracuse University. Among other grants, she was awarded the 2002 Stanley Paterson research fellowship by the Friends of the Longfellow House, Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of "Northmen and Native Americans: The Politics of Landscape in the Age of Longfellow" (*New England Quarterly* 80:3 [2007]: 435–458), an article drawn from her book manuscript, *Eclipse of Empires: World History in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Culture*.

James M. Shea is site manager and museum curator of the Longfellow House - Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site (National Park Service), Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is the former Chief Curator of six National Park Service Sites in Manhattan, including the birthplace of Theodore Roosevelt; the home of Alexander Hamilton; the General Grant National Memorial; and the Federal Hall National Memorial, which marks the first seat of the U.S. federal government and the place where George Washington took the oath of office as president.

Kevin P. Van Anglen holds degrees in English from Princeton, Cambridge, and Harvard Universities. He is the author of *The New England Milton: Literary Reception and Cultural Authority in the Early Republic* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), and of a number of articles and book chapters on English and American literature. He has also edited the *Translations* volume (1986) in the Princeton University Press edition of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau* and made contributions to eleven other published volumes in that series. He teaches English and American literature at Boston University.

Kathleen Verduin is professor of English at Hope College, Holland, Michigan. She is the author of several essays on Dante reception by nineteenth-century American writers, and she has also published studies on John Updike and other writers of twentieth-century fiction. From 1982 to 1998 she served as associate editor for *Studies in Medievalism*.

Aisha Woodward is a 2008 graduate of Bowdoin College, where she studied international relations. She is the 2008 winner of the Dante Prize from the Dante Society of America. Upon graduating, she worked in Ghana creating a documentary about a nonprofit literacy program for marginalized children, in Turkey teaching English at Ankara University, and then at Harvard University, coordinating an international fellowship program. She begins a PhD program in Italian Literature at Yale in fall, 2011.

American Dante Bibliography for 2009

RICHARD LANSING

This bibliography is intended to include all publications on Dante (books, articles, translations, reviews) written by North American writers or published in North America in 2009 as well as reviews from foreign sources of books published in the United States and Canada. The listing of reviews is necessarily selective, especially in the case of studies bearing only peripherally on Dante. Items not recorded in the bibliographies for previous years are entered as addenda to the current list; items not identified in time for inclusion here will be added in future issues of the journal.

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ADDENDA FOR 2008

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One Hundred-and-Twenty-Eighth
Annual Report of the
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The Dante Prize and the Charles Hall Grandgent Award

Since 1887 the Dante Society of America has offered an annual prize for the best student essay on a subject related to the life or works of Dante. The Dante Prize of five hundred dollars is offered for the best essay submitted by an undergraduate in any American or Canadian college or university, or by anyone not enrolled as a graduate student who has received the degree of A.B. or its equivalent within the past year. In addition, a prize of seven hundred and fifty dollars, the Charles Hall Grandgent Award, is offered for the best essay submitted by an American or Canadian student enrolled in any graduate program.

All submissions must be sent as e-mail attachments to the Dante Society at *ds@dantesociety.org*. Undergraduate essays should be no longer than 5,000 words and graduate essays no longer than 7,000 words. The deadline for submission is June 20.

Each writer should provide a cover page (as the first page of the file) giving the writer's name, local, permanent and e-mail addresses, the title of the essay, the essay category, and the writer's institutional affiliation. The writer's name should not appear on the essay title page (to follow the cover page) or on any other page of the essay since the essays are submitted anonymously to the readers. Quotations from Dante's works should be cited in the original language, and the format of an essay should conform to either the Chicago or MLA Style Sheet guidelines.

Submissions will be judged by a special Committee of the Society. If it should be decided that none of the essays submitted deserves a full prize, the Society may award one prize to two contestants, each to receive one half of the prize, or it may make no award. The results will be announced in early autumn and published in the fall issue of the Society's *Newsletter* and in *Dante Studies*. While the essays remain the intellectual property of the writers, the submitted text will not be returned to authors.

Report of the Secretary

The 128th Annual Meeting of the Dante Society (and the 55th of the incorporated Dante Society of America) was held at the Carriage House of the Longfellow National Historic Site in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Saturday, May 22, 2010. **President Vickers** called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

President Vickers introduced Mr. **Jim Shea**, Manager of the Longfellow National Historic Site, who, after welcoming those present, briefly described the holdings and activities of the Site, noting in particular the services available to members of the scholarly community.

The minutes of the 127th Annual Meeting were read and approved.

After the business meeting, President Vickers introduced Professor **Lino Pertile** (Harvard University), who spoke to the members on the subject of "Hell and Poetry from Dante to Primo Levi."

The balloting in the Spring of 2009 resulted in the election to the Council of **Peter Hawkins** and **Ronald Martinez** for a term of three years, and of the re-election of **Vincent Pollina** as Secretary-Treasurer for a term of one year. In the summer, **Todd Boli** was re-elected Vice-President for the year 2010–2011.

In the prize competition for 2009, the Dante Prize for the best undergraduate essay was awarded to **David Ungvary** of Duke University for "Ulysses and Diomedes: A Model of Unity and Duality in *Inferno* 26." The Charles Hall Grandgent Award for the best essay by a graduate student was divided between the authors of two essays judged to be of equal merit: **Zakhar Ishof** of Yale University for "Introduction to Poetry in the Form of Poetry: Dante Read by Mandelstam," and **Maria Clara Iglesias**, also of Yale University, for "The Rain of Hope: Theology and Exile in *Paradiso* 25." **Susanna Barsella** (Chair) and **William Franke** served as judges.

The Dante Society met in conjunction with the 2009 MLA Annual Convention in Philadelphia on Monday, December 28, 2009. **Nancy**

Vickers introduced **Jan Ziolkowski** (Harvard University), who spoke on “Dante and the Popular Culture of His Day.”

The Society sponsored five sessions at the Forty-Fifth International Congress on Medieval Studies, held at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 13–16, 2010:

Dante I: *Dante and the Philosophical/Theological Tradition*, **Jason Aleksander** (Saint Xavier University), Chair. **Stan Benfell** (Brigham Young University): “Aristotle, Augustine, and Dante on Virtue.” **Susan Potters** (Graduate Theological Foundation): “Bonaventure’s Metaphysics and *Paradiso*’s Angelic Hierarchy.” **Anne V. Sullivan** (Northwestern University): “The Milky Way and the Rose: Bridging the Heavens and Heaven in Dante’s *Paradiso*.”

Dante II: *Dante’s Works: Editorial and Visual Contexts*, **Christopher Kleinhenz** (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Chair. **Prue Shaw** and **Peter Robinson** (University College London and University of Birmingham): “An Electronic Edition of Dante’s *Commedia*.” **Jelena Todorovic** (University of Wisconsin-Madison): Dante’s *Vita Nova* in Its First Printed Edition.” **Karl Fugelso** (Towson University): “Dante’s Words in *Commedia* Miniatures: Pictorial Textuality as Commentary on the Poet’s Authority.”

Dante III: *Dante and Nationalism*, **Aida Audeh** (Hamline University), Chair. **Stefano Jossa** (Royal Holloway University of London): The Italian National Icon: Dante between Catholicism, Laicism, and Communism.” **James Thomas** (Independent Scholar): “The Reception and Function of Dante in Occitan Literature, 1800–1860.” **Kathleen Verduin** (Hope College): “Emerson, Dante, and American Nationalism.” **Nick Havelly** (University of York): “‘Altissimo poeta’ and ‘pacifica oriafiamma’: The 1911 Milano Films *Inferno* and Italian Nationalism.”

Dante IV: *Illustrating Dante: Medieval and Modern*, Fabian Alfie (University of Arizona), Chair. **Vincent Pollina** (Tufts University): “Visual *Contrapasso*: Illustrating *Inferno* 28.” **Kristina M. Olson** (George Mason University): “Dante’s Urban American Vernacular: Sandow Birk’s *Divine Comedy*.” **Teresa Gualtieri-Clark** (Independent Scholar): “Mussolini, Monsters and Mayhem: Modern Depictions of Dante’s *Inferno* in Popular Media.”

Dante V: *Dante and His Sources in the Classical and Legal Traditions*, Stan Benfell (Brigham Young University), Chair. **Veronica Zanoni** (University of Wales): “Poetical Vocabulary in the *Commedia*: Dante’s Emulation, Superseding and Redemption of the Classics.” **Francesco Aimerito** (Università del Piemonte Orientale Amedeo Avogadro): “Medieval Law in Dante’s *Inferno*.” **Valerio Gigliotti** (Università degli Studi di Torino): “Celestine V according to Dante: Law and Literature.”

Dante Studies Style Sheet

Guidelines for Authors

[6.12.10]

Dante Studies is the official annual of the Dante Society of America, which was founded in 1881 by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, and Charles Eliot Norton (the Society's first three presidents) and others. Like the Dante Society as a whole, *Dante Studies* is dedicated to the furtherance of the study of the works of Dante Alighieri. Its editorial board welcomes submissions, in English or Italian, on all subjects connected with Dante's life, works, influence, and critical reception.

General Remarks

For distinctive treatment of words and phrases, grammar, punctuation, style, and matters of bibliographic citation, consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* (parenthetical numbers below refer to the 15th edition). The following notes highlight major style issues and clarify *DS* preferences where *CMS* offers choices or where *DS* practice deviates from *CMS*. Authors are strongly encouraged to use inclusive language when possible.

Abbreviations

Do not use abbreviations (except parenthetically) in run of text.

In notes, avoid *loc. cit.* and *op. cit.* Use *ibid.* only to refer the reader to a single bibliographic item cited in the immediately preceding note. If more than one work is cited in the previous note, an abbreviated (author-short title) citation should be used.

Capitalization

Certain terms designating historical, political, or cultural movements or periods are traditionally capitalized (e.g., High Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Risorgimento); many such descriptive terms, however, need not be capitalized (e.g., antiquity, the quattrocento) (*CMS* 8.77–8.80). Capitalize adjectives derived from proper nouns that designate cultural movements and styles (e.g., Romanesque) (*CMS* 8.85); otherwise, such terms may be set lowercase.

Capitalize specific Dantean concepts (e.g., Purgatory), but do not capitalize units of topographical structure (e.g., ninth bolgia of the eighth circle).

Capitalize religious and theological concepts (e.g., the Annunciation).

Generic terms designating sections of poems, plays, and the like should be capitalized only when used with figures to cite particular sections (e.g., Canto 23, Book 4 of the *Aeneid*, the eleventh canto). Note that this opposes the recommendation of CMS 8.194, which specifies that such terms be universally lowercase.

Capitalize permanent epithets and personal titles that function as part of the name or can be used in direct address. Titles occurring in apposition that function descriptively (and would not occur in direct address) should not be capitalized. Titles used alone or following a name should be lowercased in run of text (but capitalized in acknowledgments and the like). (CMS 8.21–38)

the bishop of Paris, William of Auvergne

Doctor Angelicus

Fra Remigio de' Girolami, lector of theology at Santa Maria Novella

King George III, *but* the king of England

the Master

Pope Innocent III, the pope

The prefect Acerbo Falseroni of Florence

secretary-treasurer Vincent Pollina (*but* Address correspondence to
Vincent Pollina, Secretary-Treasurer, The Dante Society of
America)

Capitalize all principal words in French names of buildings (e.g., Opéra-Comique). In the names of associations, institutions, exhibitions, organizations, and the like, capitalize the first substantive only (e.g., la Légion d'honneur). Note that translated names follow English conventions for capitalization; for example, Exposition universelle internationale is rendered as Universal Exposition.

Citations

Archives and Libraries

Use full names for first instance of a given institution, though sigla may be abbreviated:

Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (= Bibl. Naz.) (e.g., Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magl. [Magliabechiana] 165, fol. 1r)

London, British Library (e.g., London, British Library, MS Add. 19587)

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (= Bib. nat.); Bib. nat. MS Lat. 6064; MS Arabe 384

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 4072

Edition-Independent Identifying Numbers

Short citations to works by Dante are included parenthetically in running text (and may be used in notes as well): titles—spelled out in text (e.g., *Epistole* 13.10)—are abbreviated as below, with arabic identifying section numbers separated by periods.

Conv. 4.24

Epist. 13.10

Inf. 31.112–14

Mon. 3.4.12

Par. 33.131, 137

Purg. 5.114

VN 4.5

DVE 1.2.4

Works by other authors may be cited similarly after the complete title has been introduced. (For example, Vergil's *Aeneid*, referenced in the text, might be followed by a subsequent parenthetical *Aen.* 1.725.) A single reference to a classical or medieval text however, should not be abbreviated.

Note: do not use a definite article in to cantica of the *Commedia* (e.g., “In *Inferno*, Dante).

Scripture

Parenthetical references to scripture should use the “traditional” abbreviations (e.g., Gen. 1:14–19) (*CMS* 17.247, 15.51–15.53).

Secondary Literature

There is no need to include a works list in addition to endnotes; however, authors must indicate facts of publication as completely as possible, including, for example, edition of works cited, series information, and so forth. For place of publication, use English-language equivalents for foreign city names (e.g., Florence, Rome, Vatican, *not* Firenze, Roma, Vaticano). If more than one place is given on the title page, use only the first. After an initial citation, abbreviate to author plus short title for subsequent mentions of the same work.

Use headline style capitalization for titles of English-language books and articles. Within titles, hyphenation of compounds should follow the “traditional” rules noted in *CMS* (8.170).

In general, citations of works in languages other than English may hew to *CMS*’s simple rule for sentence-style capitalization (10.3): “first word of title and subtitle and all proper nouns.” (This applies to titles of French periodicals as well as to titles of articles and books.) For German titles, see *CMS* 10.43. Note that Latin also capitalizes proper adjectives. Punctuation of foreign-language titles may be modified slightly to accord with American practice (e.g., change periods to colons before subtitles).

Contra academicos
De civitate Dei
Storia della letteratura italiana

Some journals follow their own convention:

Studi Danteschi
Lettere Italiane
Quaderni d’Italianistica
Lettere Classensi

Titles within titles. In article citations, titles may be italicized as usual (e.g., “*In Omnibus Viis Tuis*: Compline in the Valley of the Rulers”). Within italicized titles the embedded title may be enclosed in quotation marks. If embedded titles are clearly represented through capitalization, quotation marks are not necessary.

La escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia.

John Kleiner, *Mismapping the Underworld: Daring and Error in Dante's "Comedy,"* *Figurae: Reading Medieval Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 153 n. 33. [Note in this example that no comma comes between the page number and the note number (CMS 17.140).]

Do not italicize an initial "the" in the names of periodicals (the *New York Times*).

In indicating pages, *p.* or *pp.* is omitted unless necessary for clarity. Inclusive page ranges should be compressed according to the scheme summarized below (under "Numbers").

For Internet citations, do not enclose URLs in angle brackets.

In general, spell out series names in full; however, such well-known abbreviations as *PL* and *PMLA* need not be expanded.

Sample note forms:

EDITIONS

Dante Alighieri, *Commedia*, vol. 1 *Inferno*. Ed. Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi. (Milan: Mondadori, 1991).

Gregory, *Moralia in Job* 4.1 (*PL* 75.637–41).

ARTICLES

Charles T. Davis, "Dante's Vision of History," *Dante Studies* 118 (2000): 243–59.

Paul Renucci, "Dante et les mythes du Millenium," *Revue des études italiennes*, n.s., 11 (1965): 393–421. [French journal titles follow sentence-style capitalization]

BOOKS/ /MONOGRAPHS

Helga Scheible, *Die Gedichte in der "Consolatio Philosophiae" des Boethius*, Bibliothek der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften, n.F., 46 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1972).

Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets: Textuality and Truth in the Comedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 212–15.

REFERENCE WORKS

The Dante Encyclopedia, s.v. "Forese."

Italics

Foreign words and phrases not in general usage (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* may be considered a starting point in this regard) should be italicized (e.g., *canzoni*).

Quotations

The *Commedia* is to be quoted according to a standard Italian critical edition of the text. Those of Giorgio Petrocchi (Milan: Mondadori, 1966–67; 2nd ed., 1994) or Federico Sanguineti (Florence: SISMEL, 2001) are currently recommended.

Use a word space on both sides of the solidus (e.g., “la quale è sì ‘invilita, / che ogn’ om par che mi dica: ‘Io t’abandonò,’”).

The journal does not include translations of Dante’s Italian texts unless there is a special *ad locum* reason. Extracts from Latin texts, however, should be translated in run of text, with the original text given in notes.

Numbers

In run of text, spell out one through ninety-nine and large round numbers. In sentences including numbers both greater and less than ninety-nine, use figures. Do not use roman numerals in citations.

Dates should be expressed in the form *month day, year*. Decades should be written out in full in figures or as words (the 1330s, *or* the thirties, *but not* the ’30s).

Spell out designations for centuries and unit modifiers composed thereof:

the fourteenth century; fourteenth-century works

the early/late fourteenth century; late fourteenth-century works

the mid to late fourteenth century; mid to late fourteenth-century works

the mid-1330s, the mid to late 1330s

Inclusive ranges should be compressed according to the scheme offered in CMS 9.64, which may be summarized as follows. Note, however, that for life dates both numbers should be given in full (e.g., 1313–1375, *not* 1313–75).

- The first number is 1–99 or 100, 200, and so on: the second number is given in full (e.g., 4–29, 100–102).
- The first number is 101–109, 201–209, and so on: only the changed element of the second number is given (e.g., 102–3)
- The first number is 110–199, 210–299, and so on: the second number uses two or more digits (e.g., 1234–37, 1290–1321)

Punctuation

Do not use a comma after a short introductory phrase, unless a pause is strongly implied or readability would be adversely affected otherwise:

Thus Dante invites the reader to scrutinize . . .

In 1239 he wrote . . .

In the second book of *Monarchia* Dante . . .

Indeed, he did quite the opposite. . . .

First of all, Dante's admirers . . .

Do use the series comma: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*.

Do not separate a restrictive term from its neighbor with a comma, but do use a comma to set off nonrestrictive elements.

"In his treatise *Contra falsos ecclesie professores*, which was written about 1305 . . ." (no comma after title, but comma before nonrestrictive clause)

"In the second work written in the 1340s that was composed for his new patron . . ." (there were *two* works written for the new patron, both in the 1340s)

Spelling

Use American spelling. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* may be considered an authority in matters of spelling and hyphenation: where alternative spellings for the same term are given, use the main entry (e.g., "fueled," *not* "fuelled"; "toward" *not* "towards"). For personal names, consult *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary* or the Name Authority Headings of the Library of Congress (<http://authorities.loc.gov/>).

For possessives of singular nouns ending in *s*, including proper nouns, add an apostrophe and an *s*, observing the exceptions noted in CMS 7.20–7.22.

With regard to hyphenation, *DS* favors closing compounds that sometimes appear hyphenated (e.g., preexisting). If uncertain about whether or not to spell a term with or without a hyphen or closed up, check *Merriam-Webster's* first to verify the status of a given term, then apply the principles concerning hyphenation set forth in *CMS* 7.82–7.90. Temporary compounds that as a unit function adjectivally before a noun (unit modifiers) should be hyphenated (e.g., “she found herself engaged in a decision-making process,” *but* “decision making was not her favorite task”).

